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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

Daniel Olivers.

A

VINDICATION

OF THE

PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

FIRST CHURCH AND PARISH

IN

HINGHAM,

IN SETTLING THE

REV. JOSEPH RICHARDSON, A. M.

AS THEIR

GOSPEL MINISTER.

" FAME, THE GREAT ILL, FROM SMALL BEGINNINGS GROWS,
" AND SPREADS THROUGH TREMBLING CROWDS DISASTROUS NEWS.
" WITH COURT INFORMERS, HAUNTS AND ROYAL SPIES,
" THINGS DONE RELATES, NOT DONE SHE FEIGNS; AND MINGLES TRUTH
" WITH LIES.
" TALK IS HER BUSINESS AND HER CHIEF DELIGHT."

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APOLOGY.

ALREADY too long have the people of the first Parish, in Hingham, *it is believed, suffered from numerous misrepresentations which are gone abroad, against their own conduct and the character of the man whom they have settled as their Minister.*

As they feel themselves to be justified in their conduct, they are desirous of appearing justified in the eyes of the world.

They wish neither to practise arts, nor to invent arguments to deceive the world, but only to lay before the public plain facts, that the candid may judge righteously.

The reader is requested to pay particular attention to the notes in the margin, which will explain or throw light upon the subject before him.

Further apology to the public must be useless; facts are stubborn things, and they are respectfully submitted in the following vindication.

We feel that some apology is due to those Gentlemen whose letters or certificates we have taken the liberty to publish without their particular consent. But we are persuaded they will take no exceptions at the publication of them, while the vindication of truth renders it necessary.

Those documents have already had an extensive circulation in manuscript, if certain gentlemen have done us the justice to spread them as far as they have circulated opposite documents and reports.

VINDICATION, &c.

IN August 1805, the parish committee for supplying the desk of the North Parish in *Hingham*, contracted with Mr. RICHARDSON to supply the same, four Sabbaths.*

In the mean time there appeared to be some few persons disaffected, and by their conduct, it was generally understood, in the Parish, those few were determined to prevent his further continuance as a candidate. Accordingly there were soon circulated many wounding reports concerning him, calculated to destroy his character and usefulness.

At a legal Parish meeting, August 22, 1805, it was voted to continue their candidate eight Sabbaths longer.

Impressed with the importance of proceeding with becoming prudence in the weighty concern of settling a Minister, the Parish felt it their duty to ascertain what was truth concerning the various reports prejudicial to the character of their candidate.

Accordingly at a legal meeting on the 14th of October, 1805, the Parish instructed their committee to inquire into Mr. RICHARDSON's character, and make report to the Parish, what information they might depend upon, with regard to his former conduct.

At a legal meeting on the 9th of December, the committee exhibited their information and called upon all persons to produce any thing to the contrary. The committee reported as follows : " From the best information we can obtain, we believe Mr. RICHARDSON, a gentleman of a good moral character, as the following documents will abundantly testify.†

Here follow the documents.

* It has been reported that the first Parish in *Hingham* were influenced by political motives in settling Mr. RICHARDSON. But the following fact shews how much truth there is in the report. Mr. RICHARDSON was first introduced by the application of Dr. LEVI LINCOLN, one of the committee for supplying the desk, accompanied by EBEN. GAY, Esq. Whoever knows the politics of those gentlemen, will not pretend that *they* were influenced by a political partiality, to employ Mr. R. as a candidate.

† Dr MORSE had been earnestly enquired of by that committee to ascertain whether he knew any thing against the character of Mr. R. But he stated no charge against him, nor gave any reason to believe his character did not stand fair.

Hanover, (N. H.) 30th August, 1802.

It is hereby certified, that Mr. JOSEPH RICHARDSON is a member† of the Church of Christ at Dartmouth College, and that he is in regular and good standing.

He is recommended to the Christian care, fellowship, and communion of any regular Church of Christ, wherever God, in his providence, may call him to be, or to reside. By JOHN SMITH,‡ *Pastor of said Church at Dartmouth College.*

At a meeting of the *Andover* association‖, October 4th, 1803, Mr. JOSEPH RICHARDSON, having applied for approbation, and having satisfied ourselves respecting his moral character, theological studies, and qualifications, we do hereby recommend him to the notice and employment of the Churches of Christ, wherever God, in his providence, shall call him.

WILLIAM SYMMES, *Moderator*,§
JONA. FRENCH, *Scribe*¶.

Rev. Dr. CUMINGS of *Billerica*, in a letter of January 2d, 1804, to Dr. MORSE, wrote thus: "This is to inform you that Mr. JOSEPH RICHARDSON, the bearer, was born in *Billerica*, of reputable parents, and that his home has been, for the most part, in his native town, and in a town adjoining.** His character is fair, and as far as I have heard, he has had the reputation of good morals from his youth up. I believe you will find him a young gentleman of a good disposition and promising talents, and worthy of your friendly patronage.*"

† He was admitted into said Church the second year of his residence at College.

‡ Rev. Dr. SMITH is Professor of the learned languages, and one of the immediate Government of College. The Government of College, who were all members of the same Church, certainly were not ignorant of Mr. R's deportment.

‖ The *Andover* Association are in the neighborhood of *Billerica*, the place where Mr. R. was born and lived, excepting when pursuing his studies preparatory to his public education.

§ Rev. Dr. SYMMES, of *Andover*.

¶ Rev. Mr. FRENCH, *Andover*.

** He fitted for College at Tewksbury.

* This letter was addressed to Dr. MORSE, who was supposed to be a Trustee of the school in which Mr. R. was engaged as an Instructor.

Charlestown, August 16, 1805.

Having been applied to by the committee from the North Parish in *Hingham*, to know the character of Mr. RICHARDSON, we say, as far as we have had an opportunity of knowing him,† we find him to be a very good school-master, and in all other respects as far as our knowledge of him, is, that of an honest, moral, good man.

DAVID GOODWIN,‡
THOMAS HARRIS,
MATTHEW BRIDGE.

Charlestown, October 25, 1805.

We the subscribers, selectmen of the town of *Charlestown*, having been desired to express our opinion of Mr. RICHARDSON since his residence in this town, are compelled in justice to say, that as a gentleman he is highly respectable, frank, open, and sociable: that in the capacity of an instructor he has given very general satisfaction both to parents and children; as a moral and good man, we believe his character to be fair and exemplary: We do not hesitate to say further, that if any illiberal surmises, or dishonorable charges have been hinted to this gentleman's prejudice, we believe them to be wholly groundless.

We further give him the testimony of our highest respect and best wishes, and should esteem it a misfortune to lose him as a public instructor.

NATHANIEL HAWKINS,‖
RICHARD FROTHINGHAM,
DANIED TUFTS,
SOLOMON PHIPPS,
JONATHAN TEEL,
JABEZ FROTHINGHAM,
TIMOTHY THOMPSON, JUN.
Selectmen of Charlestown.

† He had then been employed as an Instructor of the School about two years.

‡ Mr. R's conduct as an Instructor was under the immediate inspection of those gentlemen, Trustees, and they were well acquainted with his private character. The above named gentlemen have for a number of years represented the Town of *Charlestown* in our Legislature. We presume to say their reputation for integrity is unquestionable.

‖ A number of those gentlemen have served as Selectmen of the Town of *Charlestown* for many years, and two of them, lately, as Representatives in the General Court.

Hingham, December 9, 1805.

This certifies, that Mr. JOSEPH RICHARDSON and I fitted for College together; that we were class-mates and chums the whole time, being nearly two years; that we entered Dartmouth College together, roomed and boarded together, the four years of our residence at College, and that since we graduated our acquaintance has been intimate; that Mr. RICHARDSON sustained a distinguishedly religious character whilst we were fitting for College, and whilst we were at College; that he was uncommonly charitable to the poor, and liberal in contributions to promote the public happiness. Thus far is fact.

Having been so long and so intimately acquainted with Mr. RICHARDSON, my opinion of his natural temper may be required.

I therefore in sincerity certify, that I consider him of an open, generous, benevolent heart, and of a temper naturally sanguine and habitually inclined to virtue.

NATHANAEL HUSE.*

We would also add in this place a letter from Deacon GOODWIN.

Charlestown, December 19, 1805.

DEAR SIR,

I received your letter of the 14th instant, in which you inform me of a report that I would not, if again called upon, give my opinion as I have heretofore done, with the other Trustees, in favor of Mr. RICHARDSON's moral character. I know not from what quarter they get such fabulous reports†. They were so untrue that I now with pleasure embrace this opportunity, again to confirm my former good opinion of Mr. RICHARDSON's moral character, so far as I have any knowledge of him. I have frequently been in company with him, and often find him at Dr. STILLMAN's lectures, and observe, when

* Mr. HUSE's character stands remarkably fair. His veracity has never to our knowledge been impeached.

† It being reported by the opposers that Deacon GOODWIN would not if again called upon, give a favorable opinion of Mr. R.; he was written to by the friends of Mr. R, and in answer he wrote the above letter.

returning home with him, that he always introduces religious subjects, and appears to be fond of conversing upon them.

I am always ready to support the character of the innocent and virtuous, which I think is the character of Mr. JOSEPH RICHARDSON; and in addition thereto can conscientiously say, as one of the board of Trustees, I am very much pleased with him as a school-master, and can further say, the scholars under his care both love and respect him, as far as I can find out: and should it please the Great Head of the Church to settle him among you, I pray God to make him a lasting blessing to the dear Church and Congregation; and may the God of love and peace dwell with you all, is the prayer of your friend, DAVID GOODWIN.*

True Copies.

Such are the documents referred to by the committee instructed to collect information concerning the character of Mr. RICHARDSON, and on which they grounded their report†.

But these documents, ample as they are, appear to have had no influence upon the minds of those, who seem to have been predetermined by reasons, other than those, which respect moral character. A remonstrance of the disaffected party was drawn up and signed, before the result of this meeting was known, at which the foregoing report was made, and documents were exhibited.

The reader will judge whether it was fair and honest for certain characters to influence people to commit themselves by signing their names to a protest containing charges against Mr. RICHARDSON, before they had knowledge of what the committee appointed might produce in his favor.

On adjournment of the meeting on the said 9th of December to the next day, "it was voted to invite Mr. JOSEPH RICHARDSON, to settle in the Parish, in the Gospel

* Deacon GOODWIN's character is distinguished for piety, candor, and impartiality. He was President of the Trustees, and frequently inspected the school taught by Mr. R.

† Observe the preceding report of the committee.

Ministry, there being *one hundred and eleven* votes of the qualified voters, and *sixty* votes of persons of twenty-one years of age and upwards, not legally qualified, in favor of the invitation ; and *forty-one* votes against it*."

There had not yet been any Church meeting upon the subject : The season of the year being cold and inclement, several Church-members confined with sickness, and a number being unable to attend a Church-meeting at that time, by reason of age and infirmity, who were also deeply interested in the concerns of the Church, it was judged most proper, and equally fair and valid, to dispense with a formal meeting, and to unite with the Parish, by a written instrument, which was done by a majority.

But the disaffected members of the Church, thinking to take advantage of this measure, *pretend* that on the 9th of January 1806, a meeting of the Church was holden, 'when it was voted to non-concur the doings of the Parish in the call of Mr. RICHARDSON, and protest against the same.'

In answer to this pretence we beg leave to say, that on the said 9th of January, 1806, *no regular Church-meeting was holden.*

No object of a Church-meeting was generally known ; none was warned at the usual time, in the customary manner, or was holden at the stated place.

It is stated, however, by a paper containing the doings of the disaffected, there was, on the said 9th of January, a meeting of twenty-one members in the Derby Academy†. There were at the same time forty-six male members of the Church, resident in the Parish. That twenty-one could not have constituted a majority, especially as one of the number was JOHN BEAL, a member of the Church at *Cohasset*, whose relation never was removed to the first Church in *Hingham*‡.

* Defamatory letters had been, for a numher of weeks, industriously circulated, in order to increase opposition.

† Had a Church-meeting been regularly called, it is confidently believed, and can be satisfactorily proved that those twenty-one disaffected persons would not have constituted a majority.

‡ It has been reported that a majority of the Church were opposed to the settlement of Mr. RICHARDSON. This can not be true, unless that number, twenty members in regular standing, be more than half of forty-six.

There were several circumstances accompanying that *pretended* meeting, which, without exaggeration, would not very favorably impress the reader, respecting the conduct of those disaffected persons. Though justice demand a full exposition of facts, candor recoils from such severity.

As the difficulties and disputes remained unsettled, it was proposed that the Parish at large on one part, and Mr. RICHARDSON on the other, unite in calling a reference composed of Ministers, to whose consideration the difficulties and disputes should be submitted.

Accordingly the Rev. Dr. CUMINGS of *Billerica*, Rev. Dr. OSGOOD of *Medford*, Rev. Mr. BENTLEY of *Salem*, Rev. Mr. FOSTER of *Littleton*, and Rev. Mr. GREEN of *Malden*, being agreed on and called, convened at *Charlestown* on the 25th of February, 1806*. This reference was holden at *Charlestown*, that Dr. MORSE and several others, who were reported authors of the wounding charges against the character of Mr. RICHARDSON, might have a fair opportunity to support what they had alledged to his disadvantage.

The protest containing the charges against Mr. RICHARDSON's character, and signed by his opposers at *Hingham*, was produced and laid before the reference.

Although by signing their names they were thus pledged to support their charges, and although Dr. MORSE and all others were expressly and seasonably required to appear, yet no one appeared to sustain a single charge against Mr. RICHARDSON. Although Dr. MORSE, at the particular and earnest request of the people of *Hingham*, did appear before the reference, and did acknowledge he had written to *Hingham* against Mr. RICHARDSON; and although the Rev. gentlemen of the reference solicited Dr. MORSE, he could not be prevailed upon to show what he had written or to state any charge whatever.

* Three of those gentlemen do not accord with Mr. R. in politics. The opposers, therefore, could have no ground to suspect that injustice would be done them, by reason of political prejudice. If truth and righteousness were their object, it is difficult to assign any good or sufficient reason for their not appearing before such an impartial and respectable tribunal.

On this, one of the Rev. gentlemen of the reference observed to Dr. MORSE, "If you have written a letter to *Hingham* against the young man, I wish for my own part you would produce it and let us see what you have against him. If I had undertaken to write any thing against a young man, I should feel myself bound to support it," or words to that effect*.

But all these things availed nothing. Dr. MORSE objected†, and said that *Charlestown* was not a proper place to settle those matters.

At length the reference, finding an investigation of the matters, which they expected would be laid before them, impracticable, as the accusers refused to exhibit them, they formed the following result:

Charlestown, February 25, 1807.

The undersigned Ministers being invited by the Parish in *Hingham* and Mr. JOSEPH RICHARDSON, to investigate his moral character; having read a remonstrance of the dissatisfied people of said *Hingham*, containing allegations against Mr. RICHARDSON, but no persons appearing to support said allegations—we are utterly unable to form any judgment upon the subject—and are constrained to recommend it to Mr. RICHARDSON and the people of *Hingham*, as the only regular expedient for settling their differences, to convene a mutual ecclesiastical council to judge and decide upon all matters of dispute among them.

HENRY CUMINGS,
DAVID OSGOOD,
WILLIAM BENTLEY,
EDMUND FOSTER,
AARON GREEN.

The Parish having been at so much trouble and expense to afford the dissatisfied persons a fair opportunity to terminate existing disputes, and as they thus shunned

* Can a man conceal an instrument, with which he has wounded the reputation of another, unless it be from fear of detection and merited punishment?

† He acknowledged there could not have been a body of Clergymen found in the Commonwealth, in whose judgment he could more fully confide.

an investigation, it raised strong suspicion that their cause rested on a trembling foundation*.

Still conciliatory measures were the wish and object of the Parish.

Agreeably to the recommendation of the ministers, composing the reference at *Charlestown*, the people of *Hingham* at a legal meeting on the 8th of March, 1806,

" Voted that the Parish contract with Mr. JOSEPH RICHARDSON as their public teacher of religion, till such time as he shall be ordained over the Church and Congregation as a Gospel Minister, with this provision: Whenever the opposers wish to call a reference† of Gospel Ministers on these conditions, viz. the opposition *two*, his friends *two*, and Mr. RICHARDSON *two*, and Mr. R. and his opposers a *seventh* to investigate his moral character; and if in their opinion his moral character be such, as not to disqualify him for being a Minister of the Gospel, then the above named contract is null and void."

This proposition was rejected. Another was made, that the Parish should relinquish their ideas of right‡, and meet the opposers on their own ground, which was a claim to one half of a Council.

Here follows the proposition.

Hingham, April 4, 1806.

To Gen. BENJAMIN LINCOLN and others, protesters against the proceedings of the North Parish in *Hingham*, in calling JOSEPH RICHARDSON to the pastoral care of the Church and Congregation of said Parish:

As the allegations contained in your *solemn protest* against my moral character remain still unsupported by proper evidence, before any impartial tribunal, chosen by the parties concerned; I am now authorized by the

* The opposers agent, Mr. ABNER LINCOLN, acknowledged they had the highest respect for the venerable gentlemen who composed the reference.

† The people of *Hingham* for several reasons preferred a Reference composed of Ministers, to a Council. 1. Because dispensing with a delegation from the Churches would be saving time and trouble. 2. Because in a case of difficult investigation, a number of Ministers might be preferable to the same number of Ministers and delegates. 3. Because a result of Ministers would probably have most weight to satisfy all.

‡ For the sake of peace and harmony, the friends of Mr. R. yielded what they maintained to be their right.

consent of my friends, to make you this proposition of a method of adjusting all differences respecting my moral character : That a reference consisting of five* Gospel Ministers be chosen in the following manner, and with the following restrictions, viz.

1. That the parties agree in choosing a Moderator.

2. That the others be chosen, two by the opposers and two by my friends.

3. That no other question be submitted to the consideration of said reference than this ; Whether my *moral character* be found by investigation really such as to disqualify me, or render me an unsuitable person, for the office of a Gospel Minister.

4. That the parties obligate themselves to abide by the result of said reference. Should the result determine my *moral character* to be such as disqualifies me for the office of a Gospel Minister, then are my friends obligated to relinquish me. If on the other hand the reference determine my moral character and conduct in life to be such, as not to disqualify me for the office aforesaid, then are all my opposers bound to relinquish all opposition to my settlement as the Gospel Minister of the North, or First Parish in *Hingham.*

5. That if either of the parties decline producing their evidence, it shall be considered as giving up the cause of that party.

Gen. B. Lincoln, Sir, be pleased to communicate the within written proposition to the aforementioned protesters and favor me with information of their resolutions on the subject.

With due respect,

JOSEPH RICHARDSON.

Gen. Lincoln†.

This last proposition was rejected, but was followed with a proposition of the opposers in these terms. At a legal meeting on the 17th of April, 1806, they made a

* Such a number was judged competent to the most thorough investigation, and likely to form the most impartial result.

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motion "to see if the Parish will propose to Mr. Joseph Richardson to agree with his opposers in calling a reference of eleven or thirteen* Congregational Ministers, one of whom to be agreed upon by him and his opposers, the others to be chosen, one half by him and the other by them, to inquire into his moral character, and on the following conditions;—That after hearing all the allegations that shall be brought before them against his character and conduct, together with the evidence in support of the same, and his defence; if they should then give it as their opinion, that he is a man of a good moral character and true piety†, and as such do recommend him, as really suitable for a Gospel Minister, then the opposers shall withdraw their opposition."

The Parish did not comply with this proposition‡.

They next made a motion "to see if the Parish would give their consent that the opposers should be set off into a separate Parish or Society, by such an act as the Legislature should think proper to grant, and as is usual in like incorporations."

This vote was unanimously carried in the affirmative without the least debate.

The people of the first Parish in *Hingham* cheerfully adopted this measure, especially as they received from the opposers the most unequivocal assurances, that it should terminate all disputes respecting the settlement of Mr. Richardson.

But what was the *sincerity* of these assurances will appear in the sequel.

As such of the opposers as were members of the Church had previously separated themselves in communion of word and seals, although without the consent of the Church, which is a direct violation of the platform of the *New-England* Churches, and contrary to their es-

* Five or seven capable men were considered by the Parish equally competent to determine such a case as a greater number.

† This was objected against as inconsistent, and as a point that none but the omniscient Searcher of hearts could determine.

‡ The reader will judge whether the propositions of Mr. R's friends were unreasonable.

tablished usages, the first Church and Parish felt themselves perfectly at liberty to make arrangements for the ordination of their candidate*.

A Church meeting was duly notified and regularly convened on the 10th of June, 1806, for the purpose of making arrangements ; at which time the opposers in the Church who had thus separated themselves in a disorderly manner, and who were voted off by the Parish, came into the meeting and opposed every measure ; but being a minority, as they ever had been, they carried no point.

It has been reported that there was not a majority in the Church in favor of Mr. RICHARDSON till the number was increased. This report is not correct. There was an addition made to the Church, after the opposers in the Church had, for many sabbaths, held communion of word and seals in the *Derby* Academy, and had asked of the Parish a vote of separation, which was unanimously granted ; and had petitioned the Legislature to be incorporated.

Those who were added to the Church stood at least the usual time propounded, and were regularly admitted. If it were improper that they should be admitted into the Church, why did not the opposers come forward

* The opposers left the Meeting-house previous to the vote of separation, and with a number of the Parish held public worship in the *Derby* Academy. Although they had separated in this (as we conceive) irregular manner, and adopted a mode of procedure calculated to destroy all order in society and to prostitute the established institutions of religion, yet in this disorganized state they were countenanced by some Clergymen, especially by Professor WARE, who in his farewell discourse to the Parish, little more than a year preceding, addressed them thus : " I would avail myself of this opportunity, at the close of my ministerial life in this place, to offer you my unfeigned acknowledgements for the many friendly attentions I have received from this society, during the whole course of my residence here, and for the numerous acts of substantial kindness, which have contributed to render my abode among you comfortable and pleasant. These specimens of your benevolence, and proofs of your affection I have always held most precious. I shall still cherish the grateful remembrance of them, and carry it with me to the last moment of my life."

Professor WARE did no more than justice in such acknowledgements, for the depreciation of money ever since his settlement had been fully made up to him, and the Parish had engaged to make it good for the future.

Now without knowledge of the merits of the disputes at *Hingham*, (unless by vague report) excepting on one side, and without the least personal acquaintance with the candidate, the Parish had called to settle by a majority of about 170 to about 40. Professor WARE comes into the Parish to uphold such a minority by preaching for them and administering the sacraments to them in the *Derby* Academy, thus commending them for their conduct. Let the candid judge of these things.

with their objections; for neither their delicacy nor sense of propriety prevented them coming into the Church on a subsequent occasion to oppose their proceedings? Surely if they had constituted a majority in the Church they might have prevented her increase; but this they did not attempt.

The Church and Parish proceeded to make arrangements for ordination. The 2d of July, 1805, was appointed for the day, and letters missive were sent to the following Ministers and Churches.

Rev. Dr. CUMINGS and Church of *Billerica.*
Rev. Mr. LE BARRON and Church of *Rochester.*
Rev. Mr. BARKER and Church of *Middleboro'.*
Rev. Mr. BENTLEY and Church of *Salem.*
Rev. Mr. FOSTER and Church of *Littleton.*
Rev. Mr. BRIGGS and Church of *Plimpton,*
And the Church of *Tewksbury.*

But it was clearly ascertained that the opposers were determined to create every obstruction, in their power, to prevent the contemplated ordination: This was not merely a surmise. The following document fell into the hands of the Parish.

"At a meeting of the opposers on the 16th of June—chose SAMUEL NORTON, Esq. Moderator.

Voted to choose a committee of nine to collect all the oral and written evidence against him (Mr. RICHARDSON) and adopt all such measures as they think proper, and that will most effectually tend to prevent his settlement in this Parish, and support the same before the ordaining Council.

T. THAXTER, JUN. *Clerk.*

The candid reader will judge how far the preceding resolution is consistent with separating from the Church, asking and obtaining of the Parish leave of separation, petitioning the Legislature and preparing to build another Meeting-house.

Mr. RICHARDSON's opposers and accusers were requested by him to appear before the ordaining Council,

not to oppose his ordination, but to support the grievous charges they had alledged against him*.

The following is a copy of the letters addressed to Dr. Morse and others, who were referred to by the opposers as witnesses, to support their charges.

Hingham, June 19, 1806.

Sir,

As information prejudicial to my character is attributed to you as the author, by certain gentlemen of *Hingham ;* and as a Council will convene at *Hingham*, on Tuesday, the first day of July next, before whom I shall stand to be judged ;—I earnestly request you to appear before said Council to state any thing you know against my character.

With due respect,

JOSEPH RICHARDSON.

The following is a copy of the letter addressed to Gen. Lincoln, upon the same occasion.

Hingham, June 27, 1806.

Gen. Benjamin Lincoln, Sir,

Your name is at the head of many others, pledged to support several highly colored allegations against my moral character, contained in a protest against the proceedings of the inhabitants of the North Parish in *Hingham*, in calling me to settle as their Gospel Minister.

On Tuesday, the first day of July next, a Council will convene at the house of Mr. Hawkes Fearing, at 9 o'clock, A. M.

Before this Council I am prepared to meet my accusers face to face, and to be judged concerning the charges you alledge against me.

Sir, I call on you, and all others of the protesters, to produce your witnesses at that time and place, that they may be heard, to support your charges.

* Let this circumstance be kept in view, that the Parish never called upon the opposers to shew reasons why his friends should not cause him to be ordained ; but Mr. R. called upon them to substantiate what they had alledged, that they might be found true, or, that his character might stand fair. Possibly they may plead a deep concern for the honor and interest of religion, in justification of their opposition to the settlement of Mr. R. *Truth* is important in the cause of religion.

Sir, I appeal to the tribunal of your own conscience, whether principles of uprightness, integrity and honor, do not solemnly demand that you support those charges, wounding to my name, or suffer me to obtain the justice of an acquittal.

Sir, I am with due respect,

JOSEPH RICHARDSON.

Gen. B. Lincoln.

On the day appointed the Council convened, consisting of

Rev. Mr. Barker, and one delegate from *Middleboro'*.

Rev. Mr. Bentley and one delegate from *Salem.*

Rev. Mr. Briggs and one delegate from *Plimpton.*

And two delegates from the church at *Tewkslury.*

Rev. Dr. Cumings and delegate did not attend for reasons contained in the following letter.

Billerica, June 22, 1806.

Gentlemen and fellow Christians,

I have received your letter, in behalf of the North Church in *Hingham*, requesting my attendance, with a delegate from the Church of which I am pastor, on Wednesday, July 2, 1806, to assist in the ordination of a Gospel Minister.

It is painful to my feelings to inform you, that conceiving it to be inconsistent with a due regard to myself, in my advanced stage in life, to comply with your request, I am obliged to decline it. I have fallen into the eve of life, and very sensibly feel the decays of health and vigor, and the debilities of old age, which cannot but render the service, which you request, very burdensome and fatiguing ; especially considering the heat of the season and the distance of *Hingham* from *Billerica*, and more especially the perplexity of the business, which from the circumstances of your affairs, I suppose must come before the Council prior to ordination, which will necessarily require too close and lengthy attentions for the present state of my mind and faculties. For these, and some other reasons, that might be mentioned, which

however do not respect Mr. RICHARDSON*, but concern only myself, I am obliged to excuse myself from the service, you request.

I communicated your letter to the Church, who supposing, as I should decline attending for the reasons aforesaid, it would answer no good purpose to send a delegate, thought it best not to come to a choice, and accordingly dismissed the business.

My letters respecting Mr. RICHARDSON, to Dr. MORSE and others, of which you have copies, sufficiently express the favorable ideas I entertained concerning him, when he left *Billerica*. They shew that his character then stood fair, in my view. And though it has since been impeached by heavy charges, contained in a remonstrance or protest of his opposers, in *Hingham ;* yet while he is ready to submit to a thorough investigation, and wishes for a fair trial before an impartial tribunal†, but cannot obtain it ; let common sense decide, whether these unsupported criminations ought to be considered as evidence, that he has forfeited his former reputation.

I most heartily wish you and your pastor elect, divine guidance and direction ; and devoutly pray, that when the contemplated sacred connection between him and you shall be formed, it may prove a happy source of mutual blessings and comforts, till Providence shall dissolve the important tie.

Accept, brethren, my
Respectful consideration,
HENRY CUMINGS.

Messrs. THOMAS FEARING,
ISAAC CUSHING,
SETH LINCOLN.

The Letters, referred to by Dr. CUMINGS in this last, addressed to others besides Dr. MORSE, are the following.

* It has been reported that the reason Dr. CUMINGS did not attend the ordination was, that he had discarded Mr. RICHARDSON. Any one may see by the above letter how much truth there is in the report.

† This remark was predicated on the proposals which had been made to agree in calling a reference.

Billerica, September 24, 1805.

Rev. Sir,

Yours of the 17th instant I have received. To your request in behalf of some gentlemen of *Hingham* I answer briefly as follows.

Mr. Richardson who as I understand from you is preaching at *Hingham*, was born in *Billerica*. His father died when he was young and his mother, some time after was married to a second husband in *Tewksbury*, a neighboring Town. His home for the most part until he entered Dartmouth College, was in his native Town, and the said Town of *Tewksbury*. About a year after the completion of his College education, he taught a school in *Billerica* several months to universal acceptance. He then came into my house and resided with me about half a year for the purpose of pursuing theological studies. So far as I know, he left the Town with a fair character and the reputation of good morals from his youth up. Before he left my family I never heard his conduct censured by any, except in the instance of a supposed violation of a promise of marriage to a young woman, to whom he had paid some particular attention.

The young lady has since commenced an action at Law against him for damages, and obtained a verdict in her favor. This law-suit has left an impression greatly to his disadvantage on the minds of many. But as the affair by appeal is still *subjudice*, I shall give no opinion about it, how it will terminate time must discover.

If the circulating reports which you speak of prejudicial to his character relate to any instances of his conduct, since he entered into the school at *Charlestown*, I have not sufficient information myself to decide upon them. In regard to politics*, his caution and reserve while he resided with me prevented my getting acquainted with his sentiments, though I was wont to express

* This gives a clue to the great subject of deep concern, and to the information which appears to have been requested of Dr. Cumings, "In regard to *Politics*." It is by no means probable that Dr. Cumings undertook to acquaint the people of *Hingham* respecting the politics of a candidate, without a particular request.

myself freely on the subject. It is said he has chosen his side* and is no neutral character.

I shall only add, that if a christian society cannot obtain satisfaction, either from the public performances or private conversation of a candidate, as to his sentiments respecting the leading principles of religion, it cannot reasonably be supposed they will harmonize in the choice of him for a minister.

Dear Sir, your affectionate and
Hearty Friend,
HENRY CUMINGS.

Rev. PETER WHITNEY†.

Second Letter referred to.

"*Billerica, Nov.* 26, 1805.

DEAR SIR,

I was not a little surprised to hear that my letter recommending Mr. JOSEPH RICHARDSON, to the patronage of Dr. MORSE, had been made use of to vindicate him against unfavorable reports concerning him, which refer to instances of his conduct posterior to the date of said letter, as if I had pledged myself for his future correct behavior‡.

The letter aforesaid expresses my ideas of Mr. RICHARDSON, at the time when it was written, at which time I presumed with good reason as I thought, that by a propriety of conduct he would secure and enjoy that patronage which I solicited for him. If he has forfeited and lost it by improper behavior, my expectations are disappointed, but I do not feel myself answerable.

* Mr. RICHARDSON's political character has been decided and uniform, ever since he was susceptible of this truth, that "all men are born free and equal." His political character was known before he entered College, while there, and ever since, as constantly as opportunity was afforded him to act any part. It is believed he is not inclined to be clamorous about his political sentiments. From no more than a modest deference toward Dr. CUMINGS, he might have been silent on the subject.

† Rev. Mr. WHITNEY is Minister of *Quincy*.

‡ This letter was addressed to Mr. ABNER LINCOLN, in answer to his. It appears by Dr. CUMINGS' answer that Mr. ABNER LINCOLN, attempted to lead him to believe an undue advantage had been taken of his letter. This probably was Mr. LINCOLN's pretence for writing to Dr CUMINGS.

Can any thing be more absurd than a pretence that a letter could be used to defend a man's character and conduct subsequent to the date of said letter? Dr. CUMINGS' letter was used only to vindicate Mr. R's character and conduct prior to the date.

As to the affair between him and the young woman, who charges him with a violation of a promise of marriage (which he denies) and who has on that ground sued him for damages, I would only observe, that as there was never any suggestion of criminal intimacy that I know of, I am fully persuaded that had the affair never been prosecuted in law (as it was almost a year after his leaving my house) it would soon have been buried in oblivion by the generality of his acquaintance, among the venial imprudences of inexperienced youth, which do not essentially affect character. The law suit is not yet ended.

If you wish for a statement of Mr. RICHARDSON's conduct since he left *Billerica*, I am not able to give it, having had very little correspondence with him since that time. I know there are reports in circulation respecting him, calculated to wound his reputation, some of which are so circumstanced as to lay a foundation to suspect that all is not right.

The impressions of such a suspicion may reasonably restrain me from recommending without further inquiry and satisfaction.

Whatever my apprehensions may be respecting the result of a thorough inquiry, I feel myself obliged for want of sufficient light and evidence, to suspend my judgment at present upon the question, whether he be guilty or innocent in the whole or in part At the same time, christian candor forbids a decided censure, especially as I have not conversed with Mr. RICHARDSON on the subject and know not what defence he could make, or his friends in his behalf. I add, that when I joined in approbating him as a candidate for the ministry, I viewed him as a fair character of competent literature and talents, and a firm believer in the Gospel-doctrine of salvation through CHRIST. What he is now in regard to faith or character is another question, that I am not better able to answer than yourself*. In regard to doc-

* It seems by the purport of this letter that exertions and arts were used to extort some opinion or judgment from Dr. CUMINGS prejudicial to Mr. R.

trines, religious sentiments and ministerial abilities, if a candidate cannot recommend himself, he must take the consequence*. Persuaded the christian society in *Hingham* are not destitute of competent judges, I presume they never will settle a man who cannot give them rational satisfaction on these points, either by his public performances or private conversation, though they may have no other objections.

From your representations, I feel anxiously concerned for the good people in *Hingham*, and with the utmost sincerity implore the Father of lights to grant you that wisdom which is profitable to direct.

With respectful consideration, I am,

Sir, your cordial friend,

Adieu.

HENRY CUMINGS.

ABNER LINCOLN, Esq†.

It deserves remark, that these two last letters from Dr. CUMINGS are answers to letters addressed to him, by the agents of Mr. RICHARDSON's opposers, and although we have not *their* letters, the answers strongly intimate what were their contents‡.

It having been reported that the Rev. Mr. FOSTER's non attendance at the ordination, was owing to personal disrespect toward Mr. RICHARDSON, it may be proper to introduce in this place his letter assigning reasons for his not attending, although it was written some time afterward.

* It is by this remark clearly the opinion of Dr. CUMINGS that christian societies alone must determine what religious sentiments are agreeable to them, without the influence of prejudices or prepossessions attached to party names or the opinions of others.

† This gentleman so very officious in his inquiries into Mr. R's character, was of late the Preceptor of the Derby Academy, but for reasons well known to the Trustees, was not continued in that office.

‡ We would with pleasure have published the letters addressed to Dr. CUMINGS by the opposers. They were addressed to him in confidence. If they were devoted to the cause of religion, why were they not open and unsuspicious, like the venerable Doctor's answers ?

Littleton, March 3, 1807.

Rev. & Dear Brother,

Some weeks have passed since I received a letter from you dated 2d December, 1806, requesting me to state in writing the reasons of my not attending your ordination —in order to silence certain rumors, 'that my absence was owing to personal disrespect to you.' In answer to such surmises and rumors, I say, *that* was *not* the *reason.*

On the evening of the sabbath before I received the letters missive from the Church in *Hingham*, my youngest child broke his leg, and the weather being warm, it required constant attention. About the same time my horse, in a fright by a thunder storm, wounded himself dangerously, whereby I was deprived of the use of him for several weeks.

I was then under engagement to preach, and administer the ordinances, at *Dracut*, the sabbath following, also to deliver an oration at *Littleton*, on Friday the 4th July—which was only the second day after the one appointed for your ordination.

Such were truly my embarrassments and engagements at that time. But notwithstanding them, I yet went so far as to engage a worthy brother in the Church in *Littleton* to accompany me as delegate, to *Hingham*, in case I should conclude to go.

But when I took into further consideration the circumstances above mentioned, together with the distance from this, to *Hingham*, and the uncertainty of the weather, the labors before me appeared greater than I could engage in with prudence, or hope to discharge with honor*. I therefore relinquished the design of attending your ordination. The reasons are satisfactory to myself, and I hope they will prove so to others. As to an exchange of desks, which you propose; I am entirely willing to make it whenever it may be convenient. As I never was in the North Parish in *Hingham*, I should

* Rev. Mr. Foster was appointed to preach the Ordination Sermon

take pleasure in a visit there : but as the distance is great, I cannot now prefix a time.*

Your friend and fellow laborer in the gospel,

EDMUND FOSTER.

Rev. Jos. Richardson.

Having laid before the reader all the letters from Rev. Dr. Cumings and Rev. Mr. Foster, containing the reasons for their not attending the ordination at *Hingham*, and fully expressing the favorable sentiments they entertained of Mr. Richardson, we proceed to give a short and correct account of what passed before the Council.

The Council being formed and prepared, in the usual way, to proceed to business, Mr. Richardson wrote to his opposers, informing them the Council were ready to hear any witnesses in support of the allegations contained in their protests against his character.

Accordingly a committee of the opposers appeared, and began the business assigned them with a motion that the Council might adjourn to the Meeting-house. It was observed, in answer, that the hall appeared to be sufficiently spacious for the accommodation of the Council and the respective committees†. It was then urged that there were many opposers of Mr. Richardson who were anxious to hear what passed. But in answer to this, let it be observed, the inquiry or investigation of the Council was not instituted to satisfy the minds of Mr. Richardson's opposers, who had already broken off communion of word and seals from the Church and Parish; had obtained of the Parish a unanimous vote of separation, and had petitioned the Legislature for an act of incorporation for that purpose, and were actually making preparations to build another house of worship. The inquiry into Mr. Richardson's character was to satisfy the minds of the Council and of an impartial public.

The Council could not conveniently have proceeded

* The distance is about fifty miles.

† As a numerous committee, agents of the opposers, were admitted into the Council and occupied the whole time they were convened; what cause could the opposers have for complaining?

in the business in the midst of a crowd, which must have taken place at the Meeting-house*.

The opposers' committee then requested that a Council, whom they had convened, might be admitted, but this was objected to as an unprecented measure and an attempt to intrude upon and embarrass the ordaining Council.

After many similar manœuvres of the opposers' committee, with the permission of the Council they proceeded to support their allegations or charges. How well they succeeded will be seen in their own report, in the Rev. Mr. NORTON's reply to their report, and in the Rev. Mr. BENTLEY's statement of their proceedings before the Council.

The opposers' committee had collected a great number of letters and documents from different sources, and many of them had been in their possession more than six months, and had been secretly and indefatigably circulated to wound the character of Mr. RICHARDSON while he was absent and had no power of defence†.

It is true that a number of Mr. RICHARDSON's opposers called upon him seven or eight months previous to his ordination and read a number of most wounding *defamatory* letters to him, at which time he most earnestly requested the favor of copies of them ; but they were denied. His friends repeatedly solicited the perusal of them, or the liberty of copying them, that the authors might be known, and that they might know what weight ought to be attached to them, but the letters could not be obtained. Mr. RICHARDSON repeated his request in

* Such a measure would have been almost if not quite unprecedented. Besides, the spirit and manner, with which this measure was advocated, raised a suspicion, that it was designed to open a wide door to disorder and confusion. Nor could an adjournment to the Meeting-house, it was believed, answer any valuable purpose. Public curiosity might, indeed, have been gratified, but would the impartial public from that circumstance have derived more correct information of the doings and result of Council, than they now possess !

† Mr. R. being at *Hingham* sometime after these defamatory letters were in circulation, Col. RICE and several others called upon, and read the letters to him, and on being asked the favor of perusing them or copying them, they utterly refused him the privilege. Of the motives of their conduct the reader will judge !

writing that he might be enabled to make his defence against them, but they were still denied him.

Thus the opposers' committee, instead of producing any competent witness, or legal evidence whatever, to support their high charges of immorality, brought before the Council a parcel of letters, which had for a long time been in use as before mentioned, and which were written by a number of his political opponents, of whose characters nothing will here be said.

Both these letters, and copies of them, although solicited by the Council, were refused to be left in their hands.

The Council, after hearing the opposers' committee read their letters and documents and comment upon them not less than ten or twelve hours, formed the following result:

"The Council having, on that day (1st of July) and by adjournment, (on the 2d, till about 12 o'clock) considered all the objections against the candidate, and having examined the recommendation of the Rev. Dr. Cummings of *Billerica*, given to the Trustees of *Charlestown* schools, while the candidate was pursuing his theological studies at the house of said Dr. Cummings, of great reputation in our churches, and having received the favorable testimonies of the Trustees of said schools, and of the selectmen of *Charlestown*, and having heard no objections to the life and doctrine of Mr. Joseph Richardson while in *Hingham*, and having certificates of his early admission into the christian Church, and of his exemplary deportment from the Professor of Divinity, Dr. Smith of Dartmouth College, with good assurances of his reputation during his collegiate life*, did unanimous-

* Also the following letter was communicated from Professor Smith.

Hanover, 12*th June*, 1806.

Dear Sir,

The recommendation which you mention as necessary before your ordination, is subjoined to this letter.

My best wishes attend you. As a Minister of Christ, may you be eminently useful. May God add his blessing to your labors; and grant you abundant success.

With affectionate regard, I am,

Dear Sir, your very obedient and

Humble servant,

JOHN SMITH

ly, on the 2d July, 1806, agree to proceed to his ordination, having satisfied themselves of his qualifications, and recommendations for the office of a christian Minister.

JOSEPH BARKER, *Moderator.*
WILLIAM BENTLEY, *Scribe.*"

Now candid reader, the next thing with which we present you, is a report of the opposers' committee, which they made to their party, and which we believe was communicated to the Clergy accessible by them, far and near, and as far as possible to prejudice the minds of the public.

An unexpected and strange occurrence threw the committee's report into our hands. The object of this report will be decided by the reader.

After having laid before the reader that strange unaccountable report, we will shew what effect it produced.

Here follows the report with some explanatory notes.

"The committee appointed to represent that part of the church and congregation in the North Parish in *Hingham,* which was opposed to the settlement of Mr. JOSEPH RICHARDSON as a gospel minister in that place, have attended the disagreeable and arduous service assigned them, and submit the following report.

"AGREEABLY to their instructions your committee collected a number of documents, and evidences in support of the charges which had been alledged against Mr. RICHARDSON, and made such arrangements as the short time* allowed them would permit.

To the First Church of CHRIST in *Hingham.*

BELOVED.

I hereby certify, that Mr. JOSEPH RICHARDSON is a member of the Church of CHRIST at Dartmouth College; and that he is in regular and good standing. At his request (as you have given him a call to settle with you as your pastor and teacher), he is sincerely recommended to your christian care, fellowship, and communion. When he shall be received as a member of your body, his particular relation to this Church will cease. JOHN SMITH, *Pastor of said Church at Dartmouth College.*

* It is surprizing that such gentlemen as composed the opposers' committee, six of whom have the honor of a collegiate education, should complain for want of time to make arrangements, when with the greatest possible diligence they had been employed nine or ten months in gathering all they could find from every quarter against Mr. RICHARDSON. These gentlemen had been called upon more than four months prior to the ordination of Mr. R. to support their cause at *Charlestown* before a reference. They

"On Monday, 30th June, they met a council which had been invited to assemble by the aggrieved Members of the Church, and laid before them a statement of the proceedings of the Parish, the Church, and the opposition, from the time Mr. RICHARDSON first came among us. On Tuesday, July 1, they appeared at Mr. FEARING's Tavern, at the hour appointed, but the ordaining Council not having convened, they retired on being assured by Mr. FEARING that they should be notified as soon as the Council should be assembled and ready to proceed. At 5 o'clock, P. M. a billet *signed by* JOSEPH RICHARDSON was received by Gen. LINCOLN, informing him that the Council were assembled and were ready to hear any evidence in support of the allegations contained in the protest signed by himself and others, and that an immediate attendance was requested. Your Committee immediately repaired to Mr. FEARING's, where they found the room, in which the Council were assembled, guarded by a Constable* with his staff and an assistant with a cane, and after being interrogated whether they were a Committee in behalf of the opposition, were admitted to the Council, who had previously organized themselves ; and were surrounded by the Committee of the Parish and that part of the Church who were adherents of Mr. RICHARDSON. The Council consisted of a deputation from four churches only, among whom were but three clergymen : Rev. Mr. BARKER of *Middleboro'*, Moderator : Rev. Mr BENTLEY, of *Salem*, Scribe ; Rev. Mr. BRIGGS of *Plympton*, with one delegate each, and two delegates from the Church at *Tewksbury*, one of whom was father in law to Mr. RICHARDSON.† It appeared

had knowledge of all the arrangements for the ordination some weeks before it took place, and they were particularly notified by letter a number of days previous.

Their witnesses also or those who were reported authors of the accusations, all who could be known, were notified by letters many days previous to the convening of the Council, and most of them lived within twenty miles of *Hingham*. Yet the committee had not time to make arrangements!

* Is it uncommon on such occasions for constables or other persons to preserve order and prevent crowds interrupting the proceedings ? If not, let no more be said upon this point, for it seems the *committee* were readily admitted

† Was that an extraordinary thing ? Are there not numerous instances in which Fathers and Brothers and the nearest friends are called upon Councils ?

from subsequent observations that the Council had, previous to the attendance of your Committee, heard such statements as Mr. Richardson, and his adherents, had thought proper to make ; and that they proceeded under the impression that the opposition were not considered a part of the society, and contributed nothing towards the support of Parish expenses, which was not a fact*.

Also that they intended not to admit any allegations in addition to those contained in the protest alluded to in Mr. Richardson's billet. The Committee after exhibiting their credentials, presented a written request to the council, that the question which was submitted to their decision should be discussed in the meeting-house, that all persons who felt interested might have an opportunity of hearing and judging for themselves. In support of this request it was urged that if the business was conducted in private, appearances would be suspicious, and the result unsatisfactory, and that the most effectual way for Mr. Richardson to vindicate his character, and place it in a fair light to the world, if he was really innocent, was to have it publicly investigated. That on the other hand the characters of Mr. Richardson's opposers were implicated, they having been accused of fabricating the charges against him†, and therefore they were in justice entitled to the privilege of at least proving *their own innocence* in a public manner. All arguments however were unavailing. Mr. Bentley, who assumed and exercised throughout the whole discussion the right of determining for the council on every question, strongly objected for two reasons. One that it would take too much time. The other that the council were convened at the request of the Church and Parish, that the Parish

* It is easy to detect this error. Some of the opposers, though not all, were liable to pay for the support of the Minister of the Parish the then present year, but they had virtually an exemption of the Parish afterward, by the vote of separation and other arrangements. The opposers had no reason to fear but that they should obtain a separate Parish unless they compelled the old Parish to oppose their being formed into a separate society, as circumstances might be so altered as to justify such a measure.

† No such charge was brought forward against the opposers ; but the reader will see in the sequel how nearly such a charge might have come to the truth.

had appointed a committee to conduct and direct the proceedings, that the council had examined and found the proceedings regular, and had approved thereof, and by their approbation had bound themselves to adhere to the regulation of said committee; that therefore the council had in fact determined the hearing should be in the place in which they were then assembled—they were not at liberty to sit elsewhere. He said that the Parish at large were satisfied, and did not wish to be hearers; but if the opposers of Mr. RICHARDSON wished to transgress the rules of order and regularity, and the vote of the Parish, he was willing they should be admitted: there are but few of them, said he, addressing himself to the council, and the adherents of Mr. RICHARDSON, let them come in. Then turning to the committee observed, he thought this a great condescension in the Council, and an evidence that they had no wish to exclude any who had an inclination to hear the discussion.

Notwithstanding this boasted liberality of Mr. BENTLEY, care was taken not to give instructions to the constable stationed at the door to carry it into effect*. The request to sit in the meeting-house being refused, it was stated by the committee, that in consequence of the unhappy division in the Parish and the appointment of the ordination, the opposers not fully relying on their own judgment had thought it expedient to solicit the advice of an ecclesiastical council in respect to the conduct they ought to pursue on this occasion: that they had accordingly invited Rev. Dr. REED of *Bridgwater*—Rev. Mr. HARRIS of *Dorchester*—Rev. Mr. ALLYN of *Duxbury*—Rev. Mr. PORTER of *Roxbury*, with their delegates: that they were then in session and that to be able to form a correct opinion, and advise understandingly, they conceived it necessary they should be made acquainted with all the facts on both sides of the question, and requested they might be admitted for that purpose.

Mr. BENTLEY said he thought this a very extraordina-

* Much of the above statement denotes a treacherous memory or a bad stenographer, and is materially incorrect.

ry request—he had no notion of having a jury upon their conduct. There were many wonderful events taking place in this day of wonders; but he thought this one of the most wonderful. O, said he, you must ask for something more reasonable than that. After this a request was made that the before named gentlemen should be admitted to hear in the capacity of private clergymen. This being objected to by the Parish Committee, was consequently not granted by the Council, although some of the clergymen some time after applied personally for admission.* These requests being rejected with contempt, your committee, after having read a statement of the proceedings of the Parish, the Church and the opposition, proceeded to state their objections to Mr. RICHARDSON's ordination, but they soon found that they were before a tribunal under the entire controul of Mr. BENTLEY, who had apparently predetermined to disregard every objection, and who descended from the sacred office of a judge, in a cause of such magnitude and solemnity to take the part of an attorney for the defendant with all the zeal of an interested partizan.† To every allegation and evidence which was exhibited, he would apply some artful insinuation, sneer or contemptuous observation intended to destroy its force and prejudice the minds of the Council.

The Committee easily foresaw from the conduct of the Council, what would be their final decision ere they had fairly entered on the merits of the question;

* This could not prevent the opposers' committee proceeding and being heard, nor did it prevent their witnesses.

No care was taken about the business, excepting to prevent an ex-parte council being intruded. The Council and the Church and Parish committees were of one accord determined there should be no ex-parte council or jury upon their conduct. and 'appearances being suspicious' respecting the Rev. gentlemen of the ex-parte council, they were solely on this account not admitted.

Though they applied for admission in a private capacity, after what had already passed, they were suspected to be spies pursuing the same object as when an ex-parte council in a body.

† Because it appeared to be the object of the opposers' committee to impose upon the council and to induce them to adopt irregular proceedings, and Rev. Mr. BENTLEY plainly and candidly remarked upon the impropriety of such measures, the committee exclaim against him and shamefully attempt to abuse him. Rev. Mr. BENTLEY's character for integrity cannot suffer much from such aspersions.

but a sense of duty impelled them to proceed though under the most discouraging circumstances*.

The Committee objected to Mr. RICHARDSON's ordination for two general reasons†.

1st. Because they considered the manner of his call and his acceptance irregular and unprecedented‡.

2d. Because they believed him an unsuitable person in point of moral character to be employed in the gospel ministry.§

In support of the first objection it was shewn, that the Parish, at a meeting December 10th, 1805, voted to give Mr. RICHARDSON a call without consulting the Church or even communicating to them the result of their meeting.‖ That on the 9th January, 1806, a meeting of the Church was holden, when it was voted to nonconcur the doings of the Parish in the call of Mr. RICHARDSON and protest against the same.¶ That Mr. RICHARDSON's answer of acceptance, dated Jan. 6th, 1806, was read the 19th of the same month.** That on the 8th of June following, eight males, all adherents of Mr. RICHARDSON, and a number of females were admitted into the Church, by Mr. BENTLEY, thereby giving a decided majority in that body, in favor of Mr. RICHARDSON††—That at a meeting

* It seems they were "under discouraging circumstances.' Must not this have arisen from the confusion and inconsistency in which their affairs were involved?

† What had Mr. R's opposers now to do with his ordination, when they were voted off by the Parish at their own request, had not for a long time attended upon his ministry, but held worship separately and were building another meeting-house? They but just now informed us that they came forward to vindicate their own innocence.—Why did they not say we offered the following evidence to vindicate our innocence?

‡ What had the opposers then to do with the manner of his call and acceptance, while the Church and Society and Mr. R. were satisfied? The call and acceptance were found to be regular and the Council approved them.

§ Would not their conduct have appeared much more consistent if they had said nothing about *their* objections to his ordination, but only exhibited their evidence which induced them to alledge such charges against Mr. R? But not satisfied with this, they must do their utmost to break up the Parish, and ruin their Candidate.

‖ Who but the Church had any reason to complain? and how is it material who called first?

¶ It has been already shewn that there was no regular meeting of the Church on the 9th of January, 1806. This can be proved by substantial evidence, and that a call had been presented to Mr. R. signed by a majority of the members of the Church, previous to his giving his answer.

** A call of the Church had been presented Mr. RICHARDSON by an address containing the signatures of a majority.

†† It has been shown that the candidates for admission into the Church had been propounded the usual length of time and no objections had been offered against them. And here it may be added that there had ever been a *decided* majority in favor of Mr. R. previous to this addition.

of the Church, 19th of June, it was voted to concur in the call of the Parish given Dec. 10th, 1805†; and at a subsequent Parish meeting, holden 28th of June, a vote passed to concur with the Church in their last mentioned vote of concurrence with the Parish, and that to this call of the Church and Parish, if it may be so denominated, Mr. RICHARDSON had never given an answer‡. Mr. RICHARDSON said he was ready to give one then. Much desultory conversation took place on this question of irregularity, in which Mr. BENTLEY took his side.

He endeavored in an artful manner, to draw the committee into an acknowledgement that the proceedings of the opposition, as it respected Church meetings, had been irregular, intending thereby to destroy the force of their objections against the irregular proceedings of the Parish; and intimated, though he did not undertake to assert, that though the Parish had not in some instances been perfectly regular in the beginning, they had since corrected their proceedings, and set themselves right.—Among many other things equally incorrect, and irrelevant to the subject, he said he should consider the call and answer perfectly regular, if the opposers had not been consulted, as they had petitioned for a separation, and obtained the consent of the Parish for that purpose; and were exempted from the burden of Parish expenses§. This kind of sophistry had its effect on the minds of the Council. The committee having clearly proved, as they believe, the propriety of this objection, proceeded to the second, that Mr. RICHARDSON was an unsuitable man in point of moral character to be employed in the gospel ministry. A number of charges of a more specific nature were contained under this head.

1st. That Mr. RICHARDSON had been guilty of violating

† This is incorrect, here follows the vote *verbatim*: "Voted to *renew* our concurrence with the Parish, which was before done by *signatures* in the call of Mr JOSEPH RICHARDSON, as a Gospel Minister, by the Parish on the 9th of December, 1805."

‡ Satisfactory answers had been given to the Church and Parish. Mr. R's answer was not written till he received the call of the Church. The answer was confirmed at the ordination. Why should the opposers complain?

§ Whether the terms "equally incorrect and irrelevant," will apply with more propriety to Mr. BENTLEY than to the reporters, the reader will judge.

one of the most solemn contracts in social life‖, for which he stands condemned in a court of justice.

2d. That he had been guilty of base ingratitude, and created much disturbance by divulging and misrepresenting a confidential communication made to him at his request* by one who had patronized him, and conducted towards him in the most friendly manner.

‖ Here is a piece of high colouring about Mr. R's having courted a lady and not chusing to marry her. The people of *Hingham* know with what grace a number of the committee appeared in making this objection.

All the difference between this, and innumerable similar instances is, *this* was prosecuted in law.

It was a civil and not a criminal action in the eye of the law.—Writes Dr. CUMINGS in one of his letters, "I am fully persuaded, that had the affair never been prosecuted in law, it would soon have been buried in oblivion by the generality of his acquaintance, among the venial imprudences of inexperienced youth, which do not essentially affect character."

* What! "a confidential communication made to him *at his request*"!? Does it seem likely that Mr. R. *requested* Dr. MORSE to make a confidential communication? Is Dr MORSE so weak a man as to be induced by Mr. R's. request, to say the Representatives of the Town of *Charlestown* were grossly immoral, bad men or weak and uninformed? Or is Dr. MORSE so wicked as to report such things unless they were true? These injured gentlemen had discovered, as they were Trustees of the School taught by Mr. R. that his (Mr. R's) conduct toward them was changed, and one of the gentlemen demanded an explanation, which was given with reluctance. For such a man as Dr. MORSE to commit such things in confidence betrays guilt.

Why should not Dr. MORSE openly caution a young man against bad company? Mr. BRIDGE, one of the gentlemen injured by Dr. MORSE, does not deny but by fair implication acknowledges that the Doctor made concessions to him for the wrong. If there were less secrecy in similar cases there would be more justice. Mr. R. states the affair respecting Dr. MORSE, as follows:

"Respecting the charge of a breach of the confidence of Dr. MORSE, I positively affirm the following to be a true statement of the affair.

Being employed as an instructor of the public grammar school in *Charlestown*, I pursued my theological studies under the direction of Dr. MORSE, for whose attention I was to return assistance by preaching for him occasionally. Soon after my first acquaintance with the Dr. I heard him speak disrespectfully of those Trustees who employed me in the school. I at first paid but little regard to it; but as the subject was frequently brought into view, it began to make some impression.

I had entertained a high respect for the Trustees and had occasionally visited at the houses of several of them; but for the following reason my conduct toward them was changed. As I was one day receiving the attention of Dr. MORSE in his study, he accosted me in a monitory manner for visiting several families and associating with them; for he said they were unfriendly to him, that *he* did not visit them, and stated reasons for my considering their society as dangerous and disgraceful. This alarmed me, and I, in some measure, changed my conduct toward them.

As the celebration of Independence at *Charlestown* was approaching, I received an invitation to officiate as chaplain for the Republicans. I had no hesitation about complying with their invitation, but in one respect. I doubted whether there was a propriety in it, as I was a stranger and had but little experience in my profession.

I therefore called upon Dr. MORSE and asked him whether there were any impropriety in my performing the duties of chaplain on that occasion. He readily replied, that he could conceive of no impropriety in my officiating as chaplain; but added, were you to ask my advice respecting the propriety and expediency of your attaching yourself to the Republican party, I should recommend it to you not to do it.

I observed, respecting that point, I am decided and would not wish to have any opinion given.

3d. That he had avowed a principle inconsistent with the peace and happiness of civil society, viz. that if even in a confidential manner an opinion were given in his presence unfavorable to an absent person, he always considered himself at liberty to divulge it†.

4th. That independently of the foregoing instances, he had been guilty of deception, prevarication and falsehood‡.

5th. That he had by his improper speeches and conduct manifested an unguarded, petulent and quarrelsome disposition.

6th. That he had by his acceptance, and residence here in an irregular and unprecedented manner, made himself an instrument to destroy the peace of this Parish and the happiness of individuals; and although these consequences were long since well known to him, he has manifested a determination still to remain here.

Dr. MORSE urged the subject and inquired of me, whether the Trustees of the school and several other gentlemen would probably attend. I replied, I had been informed they would attend.

Dr. MORSE said, that people of good character and respectability in *Charlestown* belonged to the Federal party. I mentioned several gentlemen, as exceptions to his remark. The Dr. repeated what he had several times said before, respecting two of the Trustees, "That they were immoral, irreligious, profane, bad men," and that some others whom I mentioned were "weak and uninformed." I observed that I was of a different opinion upon these matters, and took leave of him.

These remarks of Dr. MORSE occasioned much reserve in my conduct toward those gentlemen, till I accidentally fell in company with one of them, who, in the course of conversation, mentioned the subject and insisted upon an explanation.

After some solicitation, I reluctantly, though constrained by a sense of duty, related to the gentleman what Dr. MORSE had said respecting him and some others, which had occasioned a reserve in my conduct toward them. I never had the least idea that what Dr. MORSE said respecting those gentlemen was designed as a confidential communication (or wished to be kept in confidence) as I had heard him make the same declarations at different times and places, and in the presence of different persons, as if he were asserting things of common notoriety

Let it be remembered that I never asked Dr. MORSE to give me the character of those gentlemen, nor his opinion respecting the propriety of being a Republican.

The foregoing statement of facts is true and correct according to the best of my recollection."

† The reader is referred to the account of the 3d, 4th, 5th and 6th charges, contained in a Letter written by the Rev. Mr. NORTON, which will follow this report. It is needless to comment upon them now. The main point is to see how well supported the charges are found. It is one thing to draw up charges, but another to prove them. These charges are all denied, and are declared to be without just foundation.

Probably the 5th charge is principally founded on the affair of Capt. NICHOLSON and his son, of *Charlestown*, going into Mr. R's school and beating him with clubs, in such a manner as that the S. J. Court adjudged them to pay Mr. R. three hundred and fifty dollars for the injury and insult done him.

‡ Undoubtedly many deceptions, prevarications and falsehoods, similar to "the foregoing instances," might be equally well proved if, "*we do believe*," be evidence.

In support of the first, the committee in addition to the judgment of court, produced a deposition, which was not exhibited on the trial, from the Rev. Mr. Barton of *Fitchburg*, testifying to the fact. And also two letters to Mr. Richardson from Miss Robinson, the lady who prosecuted him for a breach of promise of marriage, written after the receipt of his letter to her, by which he broke off the connection between them after five years courtship ; but before the prosecution was commenced or contemplated. These letters bear internal marks of authenticity, and were sworn by her to be correct copies to the best of her recollection§. In the first of these she intreats him in the feeling language of injured innocence to give her some explanation of his strange and unexpected conduct. In the other (he having taken no notice of the first) she reviews his conduct toward her, and recapitulates his solemn promises, oaths and imprecations. The evidence contained in these letters of the truth of the accusation against Mr. Richardson, and the collateral evidence in support of it, were, in the opinion of the committee, so explicit and conclusive, that it could be resisted by nothing but the most hardened prejudice, or determined blindness‖. Even Mr. Bentley himself seemed for a moment to be convinced of its truth ; but justified Mr. Richardson's denial on ground that as Mr. Richardson had appealed from the judgment of the inferior court, had thrown himself on God and his country, and the cause was then pending he had a right to plead not guilty, and such a plea under such circumstances, was never considered a falsehood. And further said he thought it very extraordinary that a case which was pending in a court of justice should be brought before that Council to be prejudged by them. The committee would here remark, that if such reasoning be admitted as

§ This is an extraordinary kind of evidence as ever was used to prove a person guilty. Copies of letters sworn to as correct, taken, not from originals nor from copies, but from recollection, a number of years after they had been seen by the party so much self-interested. If such letters could be legal or credible evidence the learned reporters have knowledge of laws not generally known.

‖ "*Prejudice or determined blindness.*" A high charge! Whether it be the result of candor, or whether substantiated, the reader will judge.

correct, the consequences which will follow are incalculable. The indictment of a man for crimes of ever so heinous a nature must form no objection to his being introduced into the gospel ministry, lest the court before whom the criminal should be tried, might possibly be influenced by the opinion of an ordaining council.§ Dr. Morse's evidence being necessary to prove the truth of the second accusation, and he not having arrived, it was accordingly postponed.‖ At this stage of the business, it being about 10 o'clock, the Council adjourned, and met again the next morning at about 7, when the third charge was brought forward and supported by the testimony of Mr. Hoar, and was not denied by Mr. Richardson.¶ In support of the fourth, a number of circumstances were mentioned, which the committee believe went to substantiate the accusation.* But the most striking instance which was produced, was a statement made in writing to the Parish at their meeting, Dec. 10, 1805. Mr. Richardson's letter of defence (as it is called) which was read at that meeting, was called for by the committee, and an extract relative to his leaving the boarding house of Mr. Adams, in *Charlestown*, was read by the Council. Mr. Richardson therein stated, that the day after he left Mr. Adams', he called there on some business, that Mr. Adams then expressed his regret that Mr. Richardson had left him, and said the young gentlemen who boarded with him were also sorry for what had happened, and wished him to return and overlook all that had taken place, that he did not return because he had engaged other lodgings. A deposition was produced from Mr. Adams, testifying that he never made any declaration of

§ Rev. Mr. Bentley never objected against looking into the case, but only maintained that in law, pleading not guilty, though judgment was given against the defendant, is not proof of falsehood. Though, as has been remarked, the case was considered in law a civil and not a criminal action, yet the reporters would represent it as a crime of the first magnitude.

‖ All the charges, the reporters say were "completely substantiated." How their words agree! Dr. Morse's evidence never was exhibited.

¶ The third charge was not supported by Mr. Hoar, nor was it confessed by Mr. Richardson. Mr. Hoar and Mr R. cheerfully agreed in their conference upon the subject before the Council. Their conversation can be stated should it be required.

* "The committee believe"! Had the ground of the belief been exhibited, would it not be more satisfactory to the reader?

the kind, but on the contrary that he believed nothing but the most ample acknowledgements on the part of Mr. RICHARDSON would have satisfied those gentlemen, and that his return without such acknowledgements, would have been the signal for them to leave the house.† An affray which took place between Mr. RICHARDSON and a gentleman in *Charlestown*, and several other facts, were adduced in support of the fifth charge.‡ Mr. ADAMS from *Acton*, asserted, that he was in company with Mr. RICHARDSON at *Concord*, a few months before he came to preach in this town, that Mr. RICHARDSON then said something to this effect, that "he had quitted preaching because he despised the clergy and the profession, and appeared to wish the company to understand that he was ashamed of ever having had any connexion with the clerical order." Mr. RICHARDSON said he did not recollect ever to have seen Mr. ADAMS before and wished him to state the place and circumstances when this declaration was made. Mr. ADAMS accordingly stated the place and circumstances and persons present, all which Mr. RICHARDSON remembered; but said it was a new charge, which he was not prepared to answer, but had he known it in season, he could have produced the persons who were present.§

The sixth charge was considered self evident, and needed no proof. The committee having gone through

† Here a deposition is brought forward in opposition to Mr. R's account of a transaction. But Mr. R. had no notice of the taking of the deposition, nor had he the least warning that such a charge was to be brought against him. Make the most of it and one man's word stands opposed to anothers. Is this charge "completely substantiated ?"

‡ What the reporters here say must be implicitly believed, as they have advanced so far in the report with wonderful correctness.

§ The reporter's account of Mr. ADAMS's evidence is materially incorrect. But we submit to the reader Mr. R's statement relating to the fact.

"I hereby certify, that I have no recollection of ever having made the declaration alledged against me by a young Mr. ADAMS of *Acton*. I do now, and ever have, from my childhood, entertained the highest respect and veneration for the profession of a christian minister; nor have the most embarrassing circumstances ever abated my attachment to it, or prevented my pursuing the calling. I sincerely regret that my conduct or conversation should ever have been misconstrued into any kind of disrespect for religion.

However, though I have no recollection of it, yet I think it not improbable that I may have expressed myself in language which, by a misunderstanding of Mr. ADAMS, led him to state what he did before the Council."

all the specific charges, except that which required the testimony of Dr. Morse, who was momently expected. One of the Council observed, that Mr. Bridge was present and could give all the information on that subject that was necessary. Mr. Bridge then made a statement to this effect, that some time previous to the difficulty with Dr. Morse, Mr. Richardson and himself were accidently in company with each other when no person was present : that some conversation took place, which led Mr. Richardson to say apparently without any malicious intention and rather inadvertently, that he knew certain persons in *Charlestown* were not perfectly friendly to Mr. Bridge. And on his asking him to what he alluded, Mr. Richardson after some hesitation told him, that he had been advised by Dr. Morse to avoid the company of Mr. Bridge and others and their families, and to seek that of some other persons whom he named :— that he (Mr. Bridge) feeling much injured, required an explanation of Dr. Morse, which was given him by the Dr.—Mr. Richardson then asked Mr. Bridge in presence of the Council, if Dr. Morse had not made some concessions to him. Mr. Bridge wished to be excused from answering any such questions as the Doctor and himself were on friendly terms, and wished nothing should be said which might in any degree interrupt their friendship. The Committee, considering this to be an ex-parte and inconclusive evidence, wished that Dr. Morse might be heard.

The Council said as Dr. Morse had not arrived, and as there were no other evidences to be given, they wished to be a few minutes by themselves.† The Committee observed they hoped the Council would not adjourn, as they had many observations to make as well as Dr. Morse's evidence to exhibit. The Council replied that they had not adjourned ; but as they had been a considerable time in session, and felt somewhat exhausted, they wished to have a little respite just to take breath ;

† The Council particularly and repeatedly asked the opposers' committee whether they had any thing more to offer or any other charges to bring forward, to which the same committee replied, that they had nothing more to offer.

intimating at the same time that the committee should be heard further.* All present except the Council accordingly retired.—After the committee had waited some time, they began to suspect that there might possibly be a misunderstanding between them and the Council with regard to their being heard further,† or that the Council had determined to hear nothing more; and handed in a written request that the ordination might be postponed until the fate of the petition for a separation should be known.‡ Immediately after this a letter was received from the Council of the opposition, containing their advice, another written request founded on this advice was sent to the Council, viz. that the ordination might be postponed until a mutual Council should be called to investigate the whole subject, and determine on the expediency of Mr. RICHARDSON's settlement in this place. To neither of these did the Council return any answer, and in a short time it was proclaimed that the Council would be in the meeting-house at half past 12 o'clock. Thus the Committee were unexpectedly, and as they conceive unfairly debarred from a privilege which they understood had been implicitly promised them of supporting one of their most important charges, and making such observations on the whole subject as they deemed pertinent to the occasion.‖ They believed the business not closed not only from observations of the Council previous to their leaving the room; but from the circumstances of Mr. RICHARDSON's not having made his defence§ and the papers which they held as evidences not having been called for by the Council; who appeared

* The Council did not suggest a wish to interrupt or prevent the proceedings of the opposers' committee. All their papers were read, and all they could say was heard.

† "Being heard further." Why should they expect a further hearing, when they had made the declaration they had nothing further to exhibit?

‡ The Council had much encouragement to shew the favour of postponing the Ordination, considering the conduct of those opposers in creating all possible disturbance and difficulty after they were generously voted off by the Parish!

‖ After having had a patient hearing for a great part of two days, and after having made the declaration that they had nothing further to exhibit, we are not a little surprized that they should complain of being debarred the privilege of a further hearing.

§ The Council refused to hear Mr. RICHARDSON's defence. They were well satisfied without it.

edge, were produced to the Council which invalidated a single fact.

The moderator of the Council, though he was careful to inform the Congregation when assembled in the meeting house, that the Council had found nothing against Mr. RICHARDSON, to disqualify him for a Gospel Minister, was equally careful to avoid saying, that the allegations brought forward by the opposition were unsupported.†

The Committee therefore, after the opportunity they have had to make themselves acquainted with the facts relative to the subject, are irresistibly led to the conclusion, and feel it their duty to declare their belief, that these charges were entirely disregarded, and that Mr. RICHARDSON was ordained by a partial Council, selected for party purposes and wholly under the influence of party considerations; and that the whole transaction is without a parallel in the Ecclesiastical history of *New-England*.‡

B. LINCOLN,
NATHAN RICE,
SAMUEL NORTON,
THOMAS LORING,
LEVI LINCOLN, Jun.
ROBERT THAXTER,
JEROM CUSHING,
} *Committee.*

A true copy from the original.

H. THAXTER.

P. S. ABNER LINCOLN, Esq. Dea. WILLIAM CUSHING, EBENEZER GAY, Esq. and Mr. CALEB THAXTER, were of said Committee,‖ but from necessity were prevented attending.

† The Moderator's declaration, "That the Council found nothing against Mr. RICHARDSON to disqualify him for a gospel Minister" fairly implies, "that the allegations brought forward by the opposition were unsupported," or that whatever evidence they exhibited had little or no weight on the minds of the Council.

‡ We here would only ask, is the candor of these concluding remarks designed for imitation!!!

But let the reader after critically perusing the preceding report and all the documents in this pamphlet, draw up his *own* "belief."

It is of vast importance to ourselves and others when we form any conclusion respecting matters of weight, that it be founded in truth.

‖ "Let him that is without sin cast the first stone."

Having briefly noticed some of the principal errors and incorrect statements in the opposers' report, which could not have been so authentically detected by any as by those who were witnesses to events as they passed, we are happy to introduce the reader to a highly interesting reply made to the same report by Rev. Mr. NORTON of *Weymouth.*

This reply can not be attributed to political partiality, to a prepossession of personal acquaintance or to any suspicious motive whatever. Whoever knows the character of this gentlemen knows there is no man more remote or aloof from the influence of sinister motives.

These circumstances give irresistible weight to his judgment.

The letter requesting permission to publish Rev. Mr. NORTON's Letter and his answer are here submitted.

Hingham, Sept. 23, 1807.

REV. SIR,

Having obtained the favor of perusing a letter addressed by you to Col. NATHAN RICE, dated *Weymouth*, August 11, 1806, which is interesting ; and as we view it, a candid and able review of the late controversy concerning the settlement of Mr. RICHARDSON as the Minister of the first Parish in *Hingham :* We hereby request your permission that we may publish it to the world.

Sir, we are pursuaded your inviolable attachment to the cause of truth and rectitude will incline you to comply with our request, and to obey the call, as we believe, of duty.

To grant this request, will be, in our opinion, to confer an important favor upon the public, and will increase the obligations of yours,

With unfeigned affection and respect,

JACOB LEAVITT,
SETH LINCOLN,
SOLOMON JONES,
JEDEDIAH LINCOLN,
JOTHAM LINCOLN, Jr.

In behalf of the Committee appointed by the Parish to collect documents, &c. relative to the late controversy concerning the settlement of Mr. Richardson.

Rev. J. NORTON.

Weymouth, Sept. 29, 1807.

GENTLEMEN,

I have received your note of 23d inst. in which you request permission to publish a letter which I addressed to Col. NATHAN RICE, bearing date August 11, 1806, on the subject you mention.—As the letter was written, not for public inspection, but with a view to satisfy what I believed might reasonably be deemed a just claim of several gentlemen in *Hingham*, I have doubted the propriety of its publication "to the world"; but, apprised that several copies of it are in circulation, some of which it is believed, are very considerably incorrect; and earnestly desirous that it may be instrumental to the developement of truth, independent of party views or local considerations, I feel constrained, although with a degree of reluctance, to consent to its publication.

Fervently wishing that "the cause of truth and rectitude" may be supported, whether it contribute to the brightening, or to the obscurity of your affairs,

I am, gentlemen, your's, &c.

JACOB NORTON.

Messrs. JACOB LEAVITT,
SETH LINCOLN,
SOLOMON JOSES,
JEDEDIAH LINCOLN,
JOTHAM LINCOLN, jun.

Weymouth, August, 11, 1806.

DEAR SIR,

Such has been your intercourse with the world, such your acquaintance with the human character, and such your knowledge of the revolution of events, and of their influence on the feelings, judgment, decisions and pursuits of men, that you experience, it is presumed, little or no surprize in observing in others, or in finding in yourself, at different times, and under different circumstances, a diversity of views, sentiments, determinations and conduct, with respect to a variety of objects. Not only is man thus subject to change; but thus to change, not unfrequently, becomes his indispensable duty.

The late conversation which took place between us, on certain subjects of an interesting and important nature, in connection with several previous and subsequent events has given rise to these reflections. Your sentiments and feelings, as well as mine, have undergone, since that time, it is not unlikely, more or less, an unexpected revolution. Whether this observation, sir, will, with propriety, apply to yourself, I shall, however, hazard no peremptory decision; but to the writer it applies with much pertinency and force. To be more explicit, I would observe, that several communications which you made at our late interview, respecting the gentleman newly ordained, and the situation of things, generally, in *Hingham*, led me strongly to suspect, that I had too precipitately "made up my mind respecting them." They occasioned me very unpleasant sensations, and led me considerably to doubt the propriety of carrying into effect an exchange of pulpit services with Mr. RICHARDSON, to which, at his request, I had previously consented. Certain written documents, which I soon after received, and as I apprehend from yourself, although through another medium, greatly added to my doubts, and painfully perplexed my mind. The result was a determination, that if I had been precipitate in *conclusion* with respect to an affair of so much importance as that of ministerial intercourse with a brother, I would not commit myself by precipitation in *conduct*. I deliberately resolved to suspend the interchange of prefessional services with Mr. RICHARDSON, which had some days before been negociated, till I should be satisfied that no reasonable objection, at least, in my own mind, would forbid it. I accordingly wrote a billet to Mr. RICHARDSON on Friday morning, the 8th inst. that my situation was such, as to make it desirable that our proposed exchange be postponed; and that he must place no dependance on it.

The messenger, on his return, informed me that Mr. RICHARDSON was not at his lodgings; that he was gone to a considerable distance on a visit to his friends, and that it was uncertain whether he would return before the sabbath. He accordingly returned the billet with the

seal unbroken. On the evening of the same day, documents were, unsought for and unexpected, put into my hands by certain gentlemen from *Hingham*, Mr. Richardson's adherents, accompanied with several verbal statements.—Upon these I bestowed that attention and gave them that weight to which I believed they had a reasonable claim. The result of which was a decided and conscientious belief, that I could not consistently with social or religious obligation decline, or even suspend the exchange of pulpit labors with Mr. Richardson, which had been negociated between us. I accordingly gave a *mental* consent that the exchange should not be delayed, but by permission of providence, be carried into effect. A *practical* consent, you doubtless are acquainted has been the result. My conduct, sir, in this affair, while it has been accompanied, on my part, with unpleasant reflections and painful feelings, from a variety of considerations, *has resulted* from a conviction, not only of its propriety, but of moral obligation.

That this conviction has arisen from an unbiassed investigation and adequate view of facts and evidence, I would by no means positively assert. I am not altogether unapprised, I trust, of the deceitfulness and treachery of the human heart, and particularly of my own ; and of the strength and subtility of its latent prejudices. This, however, I do not hesitate to say, that it has been my serious object to ascertain, with relation to the subject under review, what is truth ? what is duty ? and to act accordingly.

Permit me, Sir, respectfully to solicit your attention to the leading considerations, which have influenced my mind and directed my conduct in the case before us.—The first I shall mention is the *result of Mr.* Richardson's *ordaining Council.*

This result, Sir, if I understand it, as I think I do, goes to represent Mr. Richardson's moral character as unexceptionably good, or at least, as free from all such blemishes in their opinion, as would disqualify him for the Gospel Ministry, and that his qualifications generally for that important and sacred trust, are desirably com-

petent. That an ecclesiastical Council deputed from four regular Christian *Churches*, the members of which Council, generally, at least, were strangers to Mr. Richardson; and of course were not likely to have been under any prepossessions either for, or against him; and who were little, if at all acquainted with the situation of things in *Hingham*, before they arrived there for the purpose of transacting the business assigned them—that such a Council, should, after attending to the documents laid before them, by Mr. Richardson's opposers as well as adherents, have been unanimous in deciding and conducting as they did, had they believed that Mr. Richardson was an unworthy and an unsuitable man to be inducted into the work of the Gospel Ministry, in the town of *Hingham*, is hardly credible. To me, (perhaps, however, I express myself too strongly,) it is utterly incredible. I should probably have used expressions less confident, were it not that I am personally acquainted with several of the gentlemen, of whose integrity and uprightness, I cannot but entertain a very high opinion.

The second consideration, which influenced my mind and directed my conduct, in relation to the case before us, was drawn from several documents testifying to the respectability of Mr. Richardson's character in a literary, social and religious view. From unquestionable authority it appears that Mr. Richardson, while an under-graduate at College, was admitted a member of the *P. B. K.* society, and of the society of *Amicorum Socialium.* Had he not been respectable as a scholar, and in the confidence of the members of those societies as a gentleman, possessed, of at least, the social virtues, it is presumable that he would not have been received into their respective fraternities. From unquestionable authority, it does, or may appear that he made a public profession of the christian religion, and was admitted a member of the Church at *Dartmouth* College at an early period after admission into that literary institution; that he maintained "a regular and good standing" in that *Church* till the year 1802, when his particular religious connexion with it was dissolved; and that he was recommended

by the Pastor, professor SMITH, "to the christian care, fellowship and communion of any regular Church of Christ, wherever God in his providence might call him." It appears also from the testimony of Mr. NATHANIEL HUSE, a candidate preacher, that he was a fellow student with Mr. RICHARDSON about two years, while fitting for College; that he chambered with him during their four years residence at College; that they had frequently corresponded with, and visited each other since their graduation, and that Mr. RICHARDSON "sustained a character *distinguishedly remarkable* for religion; that he was so strictly moral, that he was generally considered a little superstitious; that he was likewise uncommonly charitable to the poor, and liberal in contributions of a public nature; that in respect to his temper and disposition he ever considered him a man of a good disposition of soul; of an open, generous and benevolent heart, and as a man of vital piety."

It further appears from the testimony of the *Andover* Association, of December 4th, 1803, that Mr. "RICHARDSON's moral character, theological studies and qualifications" were such, in their estimation, as to entitle him to their patronage and "recommendation to the notice and employment of the Churches of Christ wherever God in his providence should call him." This association, it appears, was held in the neighborhood of the place where Mr. RICHARDSON was born and brought up, and that he was introduced to the association by Dr. CUMINGS. It further appears from the recommendation of Mr. RICHARDSON by Dr. CUMINGS to Dr. MORSE, dated January 1804, that he considered him as possessing "a fair character; as having the reputation of good morals from his youth up; as being a man of a good disposition, of promising talents, and as worthy of patronage." From a subsequent letter of the Dr's. dated September 24th, 1805, it appears that Mr. RICHARDSON taught a school in *Billerica*, after leaving College, to "universal acceptance"; and that after this, having pursued theological studies with him (the Doctor) about half a year, he left the town with a fair character, and the reputation

of good morals from his youth up." The Dr. subjoins, that before he left his family he never heard his conduct censured by any, except in the instance of a supposed violation of a promise of marriage to a young woman, to whom he had paid *some* particular attention.

It further appears from a declaration, bearing date Aug. 16, 1805, of Messrs. D. Goodwin, T. Harris and M. Bridge, Trustees to an Academy in *Charlestown*, which, for some time, had been instructed by Mr. Richardson, that they "found in him a very good schoolmaster, and his character, in *all other respects*, as far as they had knowledge of him, that of an honest, moral, good man." From a declaration of the selectmen of *Charlestown*, of October 25, 1805, it appears, that in justice to Mr. Richardson they are "compelled to say, that as a gentleman, he is highly respectable, frank, open and sociable; that in the capacity of an instructor he has given very general satisfaction, both to parents and children; that as a moral and good man, they believe his character to be fair and exemplary, and that if any illiberal surmises or dishonorable charges have been hinted to his prejudice, they believe them to be *wholly* groundless." In addition to these testimonials, it appears from certificates of Messrs. A. Adams and P. Nichols, gentlemen in *Charlestown*, in whose families Mr. Richardson was, for a considerable time, a boarder, "that his conduct towards them and their families, was quiet and peaceable, and that it was *at all times* very civil and respectful, and such as gave them *no reason to complain*." In fine, from a testimony of Dec. 19, 1805, from Deacon Goodwin of *Charlestown*, who had been in habits of intimacy with Mr. Richardson, it appears, that in his view Mr. Richardson's moral and religious character is distinguishedly fair and good. Permit me, Sir, here to observe, that I have had verbal assurance from several persons in *Hingham*, who must be supposed to be most intimately acquainted with Mr. Richardson, that since his residence in that place, his disposition for mildness and his conduct for prudence, have been peculiarly eminent.

These testimonials, Sir, in favor of Mr. Richardson

as a literary, fair, moral and religious character, are certainly very ample and direct. On the source whence they are derived, it is needless to comment. In general, at least, they will be admitted to be very respectable, and as carrying much weight and conviction. To *their* influence the late decision of my mind and subsequent conduct, have, in a great measure, been owing.

In the third place I would observe, that the narrative drawn up by a Committee in the opposition to Mr. Richardson, relative to events which took place previous to, and at the time of his ordination, with the other documents unfavorable to his moral character, are not attended with such evidence and weight, in my mind, as to produce much conviction. The narrative, indeed, contains charges very grievous and pointed, as well against Mr. Richardson's adherents and the proceedings of his ordaining council, as against him, personally—Nor will it by any be questioned that it has the sanction of names of high respectability. But that "every charge" which those gentlemen "brought forward against Mr. Richardson was *completely substantiated*," or that "ample evidence was *adduced* in support of them, and that no documents, or evidence of any kind, were produced to the Council which invalidated a single fact," will not so readily be admitted; nor that several other charges or imputations, are entitled to unlimited credence.

Such, Sir, is the moral constitution or organization of man, as to render him extremely liable to view objects, and especially under certain circumstances, through an obscure and deceptious medium; and to give them a correspondent description. These remarks, Sir, I would by no means be understood as making with exclusive application to any individual, or individuals, but with application to that being, in whose nature "are centered such strange extremes and marvellously mixed," I mean the being man. From these premises I am led to observe, that I cannot easily persuade myself to admit that the adherents of Mr. Richardson accused his opposers of "*fabricating* the charges against him," and especially as the most important of them were known to

have originated at a distance ; nor that " Mr. BENTLEY *assumed and exercised*, throughout the whole discussion, the *right* of determining for the Council, on every question" brought before them ; nor that the requests made by the opposers to Mr. RICHARDSON, to the Council, were " rejected with *contempt ;*" nor that they (the opposers) were before a " tribunal, under the *entire controul* of Mr. BENTLEY ;" nor that " to every allegation and evidence which was exhibited, he applied some *artful insinuation*, *sneer*, or *contemptuous observation*, intended to destroy its force," &c. ; nor that the Council " viewed the opposition, as well as the serious charges which were exhibited against him, (Mr. RICHARDSON) in so contemptuous a light" as to render it " impossible to give a just representation upon paper ;" nor that every charge which was " brought forward against Mr. RICHARDSON, was completely substantiated ;" nor that " *ample evidence* was adduced in support of them," while (as the Committee suppose) " no documents or evidence of *any kind*, were produced to the Council which invalidated a single fact ;" nor, in fine, that the charges exhibited against Mr. RICHARDSON, were *entirely disregarded ;* nor that Mr. RICHARDSON " was ordained by a partial Council, selected for party purposes and *wholly* under the influence of party considerations."*

I presume, Sir, that I am not often suspected of entertaining too favorable or exalted an opinion of human nature or conduct ; yet, although at the hazard of incurring such a suspicion, I now feel myself constrained to say, that I neither do, nor at present can believe, that the gentlemen, criminated by the above declarations and charges, are so devoid of the principles of integrity, and

* It has been suggested to the writer that the above observations have been considered as a charge against the Committee, whose names are annexed to the report under review, of *lying*.—Whether they can reasonably be construed into such a charge, the impartial reader will judge. If this really be the case, the writer has to regret, that his expressions and design were unhappily at variance ; but is happy in embracing this opportunity to assure the respectable gentlemen of that Committee, it was far from his intention to insinuate that they *designedly* introduced into their narrative, or report, any false statements, or unjust representations.—He would be understood only as saying, that he cannot see with their eyes, nor draw the same conclusions, which are drawn by them, from certain premises.

of religion, as to conduct in the manner represented. I know not, Sir, but I lean too much to the favorable side ; but thus to err, it is generally thought, is more excuseable, than the error reversed. While I wish to avoid the insinuation that the respectable gentlemen of the Committee have, with design, made incorrect statements and unjust conclusions, I cannot forbear expressing it as my serious belief, that the imperfection inseparable from human nature, has had some secret influence in biassing their minds and directing the pen. If this observation savour of an uncandid disposition, I pray the gentlemen to forgive me the wrong.

From several statements in the narrative, it appears that the Committee esteem the conduct of the Council, relative to the non-admission of several gentlemen of the Clergy and others, into the Council chamber, as improper and censurable. On this subject, Sir, I do not feel myself competent to a satisfactory decision.

Statements very considerably variant from those contained in the narrative, respecting that business, I have heard made, and from highly respectable authority.—As in most other cases of a similar nature, so in this, it is not improbable there are two extremes, somewhere between which, the candid mind will expect to find the truth. Although I have thought, and still think, that had I been of that Council, I should have advocated a different mode of procedure, in some important respects ; yet when I reflect, that a variety of circumstances might have existed, of which I am ignorant, to influence, and to justify their conduct, I would not hastily censure or condemn. But admitting that the conduct of the Council was decidedly incorrect and censurable—Mr. Richardson, I conceive, is not responsible for, nor ought to suffer on account of it.

The statements made relative to Mr. Richardson's call and answer of acceptance, the design of which is to shew that the proceedings were attended with great irregularity, seem to be entitled to much credence, as correct, when considered as made by gentlemen of established reputation for integrity ; but when I hear statements

made (as I really have heard) by gentlemen whose character for veracity is equally established, of such a nature as to give a different complexion to those transactions, I am almost ready, in *my haste*, to exclaim with an ancient monarch, " all men are liars." But a moment's reflection checks my impetuosity, and leads me to conclude, that this clashing of representation must be owing to some unhappy mistake or omission, respecting circumstances and events. But admitting that the business is chargeable with real irregularity, can it reasonably be considered of such magnitude, as ought to have superceded Mr. RICHARDSON's ordination, or to operate as a bar to ministerial intercourse with that gentleman?

The charges, Sir, of a specific nature, which the Committee produced to the Council against Mr. RICHARDSON, are of such a nature, if true, I readily admit, as completely and forever to disqualify him for the gospel ministry, without a public, penitent and humble confession of his guilt, accompanied with the *most plenary evidence* of genuine reformation. To countenance and support a man, by ministerial intercourse, of the character ascribed to Mr. RICHARDSON in those charges, would, in my view, be a virtual abandonment of that defence of the gospel for which I am set. That Mr. RICHARDSON, however, has given some occasion for those charges, will not be denied; but that they are substantially true I can, at present, by no means admit. This has already been the public declaration of my conduct. But that the gentlemen of the Committee believe them to be true and " completely substantiated," will not be questioned, as they solemnly declare this to be their belief—But while they have full liberty to draw conclusions for themselves, they will grant to others the same liberty.

The first charge exhibited against Mr. RICHARDSON is that " of violating one of the most solemn contracts in social life."—In support of this charge the Committee refer to " the judgment of Court" " by which he stands condemned;" to the testimony of Rev. Mr. BARTON of *Fitchburg*, and to two letters written to Mr. RICHARDSON by Miss ROBINSON. However, this evidence, in the opin-

ion of the Committee, is "so explicit and conclusive that it could be resisted by nothing but the most *hardened prejudice and determined blindness;* it is, in the view of others, far from being plenary and convictive.

The decision of a Court of justice, and particularly of a Court of C. P., is not to be considered as infallibly correct. And that in the case, now under review, it is incorrect and injurious, I am led to believe *partly* from the declaration of Mr. S. DANA, counsel for Mr. RICHARDSON, that "the transaction does not, in his opinion, implicate Mr. RICHARDSON's moral character, nor would it, in his mind, be any objection to him as a religious instructor"; and *partly* from such documents, as I know not that I have liberty, at present, to mention in relation to their source, as explicitly and solemnly declare, that Mr. RICHARDSON never made any promise of marriage to Miss ROBINSON; but on the contrary, that for a considerable time before their connection was broken off, he expressly and frankly observed to her, that he considered neither party as under obligation to the other, to enter into a more intimate connection than then existed between them; and that either party should be considered at liberty, at any time, to discontinue that connection.

The testimony of Mr. BARTON I have heard read—which, to the best of my recollection amounts to this only, that on remonstrating to Mr. RICHARDSON on the impropriety of paying the attention, which he did, to the Lady in question, while his object was to obtain a public education, he replied, that he had gone too far to recede. If this statement be correct does it unquestionably amount to a promise of marriage? Is it, Sir, unnatural to believe, that his juvenile fondness for the company of the young Lady, suggested the declaration as a pretext for continuing his visits? This, in a mere youth, though not to be justified, is not to be considered as a mortal crime. Although this is but a surmise, yet it comes within the limits of probability. The two letters of Miss ROBINSON I have also heard read.—In the one, I have no recollection that a promise of marriage, on the part of Mr. RICHARDSON, is suggested. In the other, it

is true, she charges him with having made and violated such a promise ; but that want of delicacy and decency ; and the appearance of a total destitution of those tender sensibilities inspirsed by real affection, which the style of the letter indicates, will hardly justify the belief, that she ever would, or ought to have accepted a promise of marriage, had it ever been made by the party accused. The declaration, however, relative to a promise of marriage, is possitively and solemnly denied. I have been very credibly informed that Mr. RICHARDSON does not admit that he ever received the letter containing it. When testimony, Sir, stands opposed to testimony, what is to be believed with relation to the case in question ? While I am persuaded that the testimony *for*, is equally strong as *against*, an accused party, I cannot give much weight to the testimony of the accuser.

The second charge, that Mr. RICHARDSON " had been guilty of base ingratitude, and created much disturbance, by divulging and misrepresenting a confidential communication made to him *at his request*, by one who had patronized him, &c." appears, from the narrative of the committee, to have been supported by no evidence.— " Dr. MORSE's evidence being *necessary* to prove the truth of the second accusation, and he not having arrived, it was accordingly postponed." A Mr. BRIDGE, however, is said to have made the following communication to the Council—That some conversation having taken place between him and Mr. RICHARDSON on a certain occasion, Mr. RICHARDSON was led " to say, apparently without any malicious intention, and rather inadvertently, that he knew certain persons in *Charlestown*, not perfectly friendly to Mr. BRIDGE. And on his asking him to what he alluded, Mr. RICHARDSON, after some hesitation, told him, that he had been advised by Dr. MORSE to avoid the company of Mr. BRIDGE and others, and their families, and to seek that of some other persons, whom he named ; that Mr. RICHARDSON then asked Mr. BRIDGE in presence of the Council, if Dr. MORSE had not made some concessions to him ;" and that " Mr. BRIDGE wished to be excused from answering any such questions." " The committee con-

ceiving this to be an ex-parte and *inconclusive evidence*-&c." Why then do the committee say, that "they believe *every charge* which they brought forward against Mr. RICHARDSON was *completely* substantiated, as *ample evidence was adduced* in support of them?" Not only, sir, does this charge appear altogether unsupported; but I am satisfied, for myself, from evidence which I consider as entitled to no inconsiderable credit, that the most material parts of the charge are entirely unsupportable.

The third charge produced against Mr. RICHARDSON is, "that he had avowed a principle inconsistent with the peace and happiness of civil society; viz. that if, even in a confidential manner, an opinion were given in his presence unfavorable to an absent person, he always considered himself at liberty to divulge it." This charge, the committee say, "was supported by the testimony of Mr. HOAR, and was not denied by Mr. RICHARDSON."—But, sir, is this testimony "*ample evidence*" in support of the charge? does it "*completely substantiate*" the fact? To an ecclesiastical court it surely does not. Here it is, that by the mouth of *two or three witnesses every word is established.* Whether the testimony of an individual, would go to convict an accused person, in a court of justice, is left to the decision of *civilians.* But, sir, were this charge to be admitted as *literally* true and completely substantiated, does it certainly follow that Mr. RICHARDSON has avowed a principle inconsistent with the peace and happiness of civil society? May there not many cases of confidential communication occur, when we shall not only be justified in divulging them; but when, to divulge them, becomes our indispensable duty? Had the Aid of Gen. ARNOLD, in confidence, related to Major RICE the treacherous design of his Gen. would Major RICE have scrupled to divulge it? Would it not have been his indispensable duty to do this? when it is considered that so many cases of a similar nature may occur, I should, independent of other considerations, be likely to consider the principle now under review, (admitting Mr. RICHARDSON to have avowed it,) to have been restricted by him, at least mentally, to such,

or similar cases. And this, sir, is the extent of what I believe relative to the subject. Perhaps I should not have decided thus favorably on the side of Mr. RICHARDSON, were it not that evidence has been exhibited to my mind, which I consider possessing, at least, as much weight to prove that the charge, as to its spirit and design, is essentially incorrect, as the evidence of Mr. HOAR, to confirm it.

The fourth charge produced against Mr. RICHARDSON is, " that independently of the foregoing instances, he had been guilty of deception, prevarication and falsehood." In support of this charge, the committee state, that a number of circumstances were mentioned, and that Mr. RICHARDSON had made different statements from those made by Mr. ADAMS of *Charlestown*, relative to Mr. RICHARDSON's leaving his house, &c. What the circumstances alluded to, as having been mentioned, were, are not stated ; but as the committee admit them to be of a secondary nature, in saying that the other instance produced, was of the " *most striking nature*," it is presumable that they were not very important. But what, sir, does *this other* " instance" amount to, but simply this, Mr. RICHARDSON says one thing and Mr. ADAMS another. Does it go, " completely" to substantiate the charge against Mr. RICHARDSON ? does it amount to " ample evidence" in support of it ? Were it admitted that Mr. ADAM's evidence possesses more credibility than Mr. RICHARDSON's, still I must consider the evidence far from being complete and ample, to conviction ; and it is with no small satisfaction, sir, that I neither have the disposition nor belief, that the different and clashing representations of the gentlemen, should be attributed to either of them, as originating from a design to deceive, prevaricate and utter falsehood.

The fifth charge against Mr. RICHARDSON, " that he had by his improper speeches and conduct manifested an unguarded, petulant and quarrelsome disposition," is supported by no specific testimony stated by the committee. Although they may satisfy their own minds by saying, that " an affray which took place between Mr.

Richardson and a gentleman in *Charlestown*, and several other facts were adduced in support of the fifth charge," their candor, it is presumed, will not allow them to censure others, whose minds are not so easily satisfied. If it were the design of the committee to state the evidence produced in support of the charges brought against Mr. Richardson, as I conceive it to have been, the evidence in support of the charge, now under consideration, must certainly appear not only inconclusive, but as essentially defective, and even problematical as to its existence. With respect to the " assertion" of Mr. Adams of *Acton*, that Mr. Richardson had said something to this effect, that " he had quitted preaching because he despised the clergy and the profession, &c." I would observe, that were I convinced it were true, I should esteem Mr. Richardson as utterly unworthy to preach the gospel, and should hold myself under the most sacred obligation to treat him accordingly—until he should give me the best evidence of deep repentance and thorough reformation of heart and life. But, sir, I cannot believe the assertion to be true. In saying this, however, I would by no means be understood to charge Mr. Adams with a design to misrepresent or utter falsehood. From investigation of this subject, I am led to believe that Mr. Adams unhappily labored under a great mistake both with respect to Mr. Richardson's expressions and design.

The sixth and last charge produced against Mr. Richardson is, " that he had by his acceptance and residence here *(Hingham)* in an irregular and unprecedented manner, made himself an instrument to destroy the peace of this Parish, and the happiness of individuals; and although these consequences were long since well known to him, he has manifested a determination still to remain here." In relation to this charge, the Committee observe " that it was considered selfevident and needed no proof." What, Sir, did they consider as *selfevident?* that Mr. Richardson's *acceptance* of a call to settle in the town of *Hingham*, and his *residence* in that town were *irregular and unprecedented?* Did this " need no proof?" Why

then do the committee say, that they believe "*every charge* which they brought forward against Mr. RICHARDSON was completely substantiated, as ample evidence *was adduced* in support of them? It is an unhappiness, sir, that either from the imperfection of language, or from other considerations, statements should be made of an unintelligible, and *seemingly* irreconcileable nature. Whether Mr. RICHARDSON is justly chargeable with the crime of destroying the peace of the North Parish in *Hingham*, and the happiness of individuals, I presume not peremptorily to decide. If innocent of the charges brought against him, it is unreasonable to ascribe to him those evils; but if the charges have not been supported, is it reasonable to judge and treat him as criminal? What are my general views and belief, with respect to the subject you cannot but perceive.—Having endeavored candidly to examine and impartially to state the substance of the documents to which I have had access, relative to the proceedings of the late Council in *Hingham*, Mr. RICHARDSON's character, &c.—I beg leave to observe, that although I am far from believing Mr. RICHARDSON to be an Israelite *free from all guile*, and although I am not convinced that the conduct of the Council was in all respects correct and justifiable, yet, that it is my deliberate judgment and serious belief that he is an amiable, worthy and good man; and, that there was nothing in the conduct of the Council sufficient to furnish an objection to ministerial intercourse with that gentleman. To this judgment and belief, sir, my late exchange of professional services with Mr. RICHARDSON, was owing.

Whether I have formed correct opinions, or whether my conduct has been discreet and judicious, I make no peremptory decision. I would only say, that I have endeavored sincerely to ascertain what is truth? what is duty? and to act accordingly. If I have judged and conducted wrong, my aberrations, I hope, will be viewed with an eye of christian candor. And I now pledge myself, that on conviction of any important error, I will make suitable concession, and that should I hereafter find evidence

to convince me that Mr. RICHARDSON is justly chargeable with the crimes alledged against him, I shall feel myself under indispensable obligation to withhold from him all ministerial intercourse and communion, until he shall make christian satisfaction for his conduct. I wish you, sir, not to consider me as standing forth a champion in the cause of Mr. RICHARDSON and his adherents,* or as criminating the conduct of his opposers, but as conscientiously vindicating what I believe to be the cause of truth and righteousness.

Nor would I be considered as throwing the gauntlet or entering the list of controversy. Such a design I seriously disclaim. I however should be happy to be corrected, if in this communication, I have inadvertently been guilty of any material inaccuracy or error, in statement.

Perhaps, Sir, I ought to apologize to you for putting your patience to so severe a trial, and for thus trespassing upon your time. I should not have done this, were it not for the coincidence of several circumstances which led me to believe, that on your part it would be expected, and that on mine, propriety required it.

Permit me now, Sir, sincerely to sympathize with you in view of the unpleasant and unhappy state of things in *Hingham*, and with you, devoutly to pray, that order may soon be brought out of the present confusion, light from the darkness, and great good out of the present evil—that grace, mercy and peace may abound among you—that you may realize, in an eminent degree, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity, and that, if it be for the best, the respectable inhabitants of the North Parish in *Hingham* might all think and speak and pursue the same things.

With sentiments of due consideration and
Respect, I am, Sir, with much sincerity,
Your's, &c. J. NORTON.

Col. NATHAN RICE.

P. S. You will be so obliging, if you please, as to

* The writer embraces this opportunity to observe, that as no particular partiality for Mr. RICHARDSON or his society, induced him to express, in manuscript, his views relative to the foregoing subjects, so, neither has he, from any such consideration consented to their appearing in print. He would also observe, should notice be taken of

communicate the aforegoing to Dr. THAXTER and Mr. HENRY THAXTER, who will consider themselves as addressed, in common, with Col. RICE.

An order of notice upon the petition of JOSEPH THAXTER and others to be incorporated into a separate religious society being published, the first Parish felt it their duty to adopt suitable measures relative to the conditions of the proposed separation.

Immediately upon their calling a meeting to act upon the subject, they were charged by the opposers with a breach of confidence and inconsistency of conduct, because they had previously voted their consent to a separation. The most undue advantage was taken of these circumstances to represent the Parish in an unfavorable and dishonorable light. They found themselves under the necessity of making preparations, at least, to vindicate their conduct against unjust aspersions.

The first Parish did not consider that by the following vote they had debarred themselves the right and privilege of appointing a committee agreeably to the order of notice to represent the Parish and to use their influence in the Legislature, if an actual separation took place, that it might be upon conditions as favorable and equitable as circumstances would allow.

Here follows the vote of the Parish *verbatim*. "Voted, that they (the petitioners) should be set off into a separate Parish or society, by such an act as the Legislature shall think proper to grant, and as is usual in like incorporations."

Now did the opposers expect they were to be left to make such statements to the Legislature as they were disposed, and thus to have an opportunity to take every advantage? The first Parish were not opposed to a separation upon certain equitable conditions. If they had neglected the business, the terms might have been very prejudicial to the interest and welfare of the Parish.

his letter by formal answer, or otherwise, that he will attempt no formal reply He will, however, gratefully acknowledge his obligation to any one, who may be able, and will correct any essential errors it may contain, and will cheerfully make any concession, which truth or duty may require.

The Parish feel themselves justified upon every good principle, in the precautions they used to maintain their right and to preserve their interest.

As the opposers were about to make their statement of the transactions relative to the dispute, to the General Court, a committee of the first Parish were instructed to make arrangements accordingly. They requested the Rev. Mr. BENTLEY, of Salem, who was scribe of Mr. R's ordaining council, to make a statement of the transactions and lay it before them.

This statement of Rev. Mr. Bentley, we cheerfully submit without further preliminary remarks.

Salem, 12*th January*, 1807.

Mr. H. FEARING, *Hingham*,

SIR,

I had seen the report of the Committee appointed to attend before the Ecclesiastic Council at *Hingham*, for the ordination of Mr. JOSEPH RICHARDSON, in July last; but as a serious reply was not thought necessary, the copy was returned. But if it can be necessary to remove any doubts on the minds of any serious persons, I am not unwilling to afford you my remarks on that report. As it appeared to be rather an invective against the council, than any attempt at investigation, nothing but your request could induce a review of it. That men who refused to trust their papers for one night with a Council, should pretend, that they were not heard, were neglected, were treated with contempt, is indeed extraordinary. Patiently, however, let us hear them, as their own words will amply refute them. Let us examine the prominent articles as they rise. Upon the organization of the Council, they say, of the members from *Tewkesbury*, one of them was a Father-in-law to Mr. R. Why are Churches invited to which candidates belong, if not to invite their dearest friends? Would a friend wish to settle a friend without a prospect of usefulness or happiness. Could a man of sense wish a man of sense to hear such an objection? And what shall we think of a report which begins in such a manner, complains of the common usages of our chur-

ches, and then dares to say in the conclusion, that the most regular proceedings are contrary to the usages of the New-England Churches. After such a beginning, we may expect to hear any thing. It then says that the Council heard such statements as the committee of the Parish, could make. But had no one of the Council heard the statements at *Charlestown*, and therefore could they not get all the information they wished in the most regular channel of information ? Could the Council proceed and not ask what had been done in the matter ? The Council had no improper conferences with the Committee. But says the Report, the Council considered the opposition as intending to pay no part of the support. But did not the Council hear all their evidence as a party, and if so, how could the knowledge of facts be concealed from the Council ? They did not deny, that they had separated from the public worship, of themselves ; had administered ordinances ; held communion of Churches, and had petitioned the Legislature, and had done every thing they could find in their power. But they go on and say, that the Council were determined not to admit any charges not contained in the protest. And then afterwards concede, that other charges were heard. How then could they be sure of such a determination ? But not to profit from their contradictions, what does a *Fama Clamosa* require in the Presbyterian Church ? After a regular complaint, must not at least ten days be granted ? We wish to know what Church denies such privileges ? Such is the introduction of this report. We are now to observe the conduct of the Council. A request was made to go to the meeting house, and the reason assigned was, that all interested might hear. As the place, in which the Council was assembled, was spacious enough, all such interested persons were permitted to enter. The pretence, that any charges rested against the opposition, could be known, only from an examination ; and no such charges were brought. As the Council were assembled in a convenient place, to which the witnesses had been summoned, and to avoid all unnecessary delays which must have arisen, and were clearly foreseen, the

resolution of the Council may be attributed to their own convictions, and not to the cause ungenerously insinuated that they were bound to the committee. In a reply, it will not be expected that any notice will be taken of those personal reflections and insinuations, which are unworthy of all men who have claims to ingenuous respect. It was a just and necessary inquiry, whether the place could receive the opposers, and the Council was convinced that they might be well accommodated. If any measures were adopted to prevent such an accommodation, as was provided by the Council, such measures should have been reported to the Council, and not have been made a subject of complaint, after the Council was dissolved. We now come to the matter of the ex-parte Council. It was first proposed to unite that Council with the Ordaining Council, and by neglecting to state that fact, the whole business is misrepresented. This proposal was accompanied with such evident purposes of embarrassment, as determined the Council to oppose it in every form. The Committee then went back, step by step, but no notice was taken of the ex-parte Council, after the rejection of the first proposal, and no orders were given upon the subject. They who know the nature of Ecclesiastical Councils, will see the wisdom of this measure. If the Council had not felt some emotion on the occasion, they must have deserved contempt. And it was not the want of independence and honor that gave unanimity to the Council in such transactions. But in the report, the Committee not only wished to appoint the Judges, but actually attempted to discourage the examination of the witnesses, and evidently blame the Council, that they were not allowed to put the worst construction, on the actions of men, without danger of contradiction. Such a disposition was discovered to overwhelm a young man, by the worst construction of all his actions, as must have alarmed every upright man.

We come now to the examination. And the first regards a supposed promise of marriage. The state of facts appeared to be, that the opposers had sent to Dr. Cumings, in whose house Mr. R. lived, when the affair

happened, for his judgment on the matter. And he wrote that as far as it was known to him it was a venial offence, and he said, it made no change in the disposition of his family towards Mr. R.: And he afterwards gave him an ample recommendation. The Attorney at Law was sent to after the action against Mr. R. issued, and he wrote most expressly that nothing criminal had appeared. The method adopted to excite prejudice was taken from the judgment of the Court. Nothing was said of a possible charge against the innocent, nothing of the nature of many civil actions which admit a good general character, nothing of the influence which could be used after disappointment for particular ends, and nothing of the true grounds of separation. The reporters, therefore, chose to go on, and by producing as of great importance, letters from the memory of the accuser, of which the accused denied that he had ever seen the originals, confirmed the Council that nothing could be safely inferred against the general character of Mr. R. which had been by other documents well supported, and therefore they proceeded upon the judgment already given, and not upon any review which might be taken, as this fact was before, but the civil action after, the approbation given by the *Andover* Association. Of what nature are recollected letters? Did they discover his promise of marriage? did they exhibit any charge of an indelicate or criminal nature? Satisfaction had been sought from the law, and the Council were unwilling to prevent such satisfaction as the law might decree, as a pecuniary punishment of his indiscretion. The letters, read to the Council, left no impression, which determined them, that a separation under the circumstances they knew, could be considered as disqualifying him for ministerial duties.

In regard to the principle said to be justified by Mr. Richardson, it appeared that it was forced from him in a state of unavoidable irritation, and in vindication of his conduct. And the person, who received the confidential communication, exhibited it in circumstances the most perplexing to an honest mind. As the letter

in which Dr. Morse of *Charlestown*, had communicated this affair to the people of *Hingham*, could not be obtained, the Council was obliged to rely upon the testimony of Mr. Bridge to whom Mr. R. had trusted the communication.

In regard to the fourth article, as Mr. Adams had given a testimony that in his family Mr. R's conduct had been unquestionably good—should Mr. R. have represented the intentions of other persons more friendly to him, than Mr. Adams thought he had declared them to be, yet as one of the persons respecting whom the conversation arose, did in person testify before the Council to the friendly conduct of Mr. R. before the dispute with Dr. Morse, Mr. R. was thought to be amply vindicated from a charge of designed misrepresentation. As to the new charge of a contemptuous opinion of his profession, it was denied by Mr. R. and which he had not heard before, and from a person Mr. R. did not recollect, and it could not be a specific charge, from one man against general character as testified by Deacon Goodwin, and the gentlemen of *Charlestown*. The sixth charge may arise against every candidate in towns in which divisions arise, and against many attempts to propagate christianty. As Mr. R's character had been violently attacked in *Hingham*, his presence was necessary to repel it. He could not retreat. To retreat was death.

As the reporters then declared repeatedly they had nothing more to say, and Dr. Morse had not arrived, the Council proceeded in their duty. It must then be considered as a strange misrepresentation, that the reporters said they had more observations to make, and that men who withdrew with their papers, believed they were to have another hearing, when they had nothing to say.—It is true that the Council received repeated notices, as the report says, but as they were without dates or signatures, they were not entitled to regard. To say the papers were not called for, when they had been asked for and had been refused, and when an inquiry had been made whether some of them might not have fallen into the hands of the Council; is to prove confusion at least in

the minds of those who wrote the report. As to Dr. Morse's arrival after these transactions, when he had been seasonably notified, and when a convention of ministers, at great expense, had met in *Charlestown* on the subject, without any attempt to satisfy them on his part, it can have no weight with any man who considers the nature of the Council, and that the Council did not obtain the letter which had been sent to *Hingham*, and it is not to be imagined that the persons who came with him were evidences of what Dr. Morse communicated to Mr. R. alone. What Dr. Morse had said the Council did not hear, and the Moderator had no information which he thought himself engaged to communicate. That ministers applied for admission from the neighborhood, independently of the ex-parte Council, was not made known to the Council.

The report concludes with remarks which betray the passions with which it was written. What the Council might feel cannot be known by other men, but the Council were unanimously of opinion that the opposers had supported no charge whatever, and the Council were possessed of such documents, which appeared upon the examination as convinced them that the most unfriendly constructions had been put upon Mr. R's. actions.—They gave a result accordingly, which the Moderator modestly, suitably, and sufficiently announced, and the Council proceeded to the ordination in consistency with their just duty, believing that very few men can produce such testimonies of their general good behavior, and good habits, and that the opposition had been guided by violent prejudices, and under the influence of the most injurious misrepresentations.

In the lives of few men do so many circumstances combine to preserve purity of character, as in the life of Mr. R. Few men are found able to produce such an ample testimony of the invariable goodness of their lives. From the friends of his youth, and a minister entitled to the highest honors, we have the testimony of his pure manners, and just deportment from his early days. From his College, we have the testimony of the Professor of

Divinity, of the Church, of the intimate companion of his studies, and a candidate in another Communion. After he received the honors of his College, he behaved as a schoolmaster with great approbation, and entered the family of his minister as a student in divinity. From this minister, who by his distinguished reputation, and long acquaintance with men is best qualified to judge of men, he had a generous recommendation to the Trustees of the Academy at *Charlestown*. Here his vexations begin, and here the charges against him end ; for he has neither betrayed the want of the social or christian virtues at *Hingham*, or the want of qualifications for the public or private duties of a christian minister. At *Charlestown* he was introduced to Dr. Morse, who endeavored to initiate a young man unexperienced in the ways of the world, into all the secrets of his own private friendships. Mr. R. gave himself up to the guidance of this man, till he found the inconsistency of these rules and his duty. Perplexed with the apparent folly of his conduct, and of the partial affections he was obliged to betray, while his friends could see no cause for them, he at length unguardedly disclosed the state of his mind to an injured man, who felt all the resentment which belonged to the injury, and yet yielded to all the reconciliation which he owed to penitence and submission. Not willing to share the folly and the punishment, a godly zeal, which is often cruel, directed letters to *Hingham*, and from these the divisions in *Hingham*, have been violent. Suspicion when once excited, and prejudice once alarmed, and anger when roused can associate guilt to all the actions of men. It was soon found that Mr. R. had in early life formed attachments, which he did not chuse to consummate in marriage, and that a resentment which had long slept, had raised a prosecution against him. This was an offence, which, while it admits all the extenuations and pity of friends, can admit all the virulence, and cruelty of enemies. It was made a crime, and then added to the list of his accusations. Pursued by a powerful enemy, and situated to be wounded by every shaft, he was daily obliged to vindicate himself,

and in the heat of resentment, and from the violence of detraction, he was unable to avoid such language in his justification, as might lay him open to fresh wounds.—He could not escape all the worst constructions of his intentions. The vindication of an act, not of his choice, but his necessity, was construed into a general principle, and then represented as unfriendly to all social confidence. But when removed from this vortex, his motions were not unworthy of that high character, the Trustees of the Academy, and the Selectmen of *Charlestown* gave him. At *Hingham* he behaved with prudence as a friend, with affection as a minister, and in the pulpit he had his full share of approbation, and displayed the talents which supported the best hopes of his future usefulness. Such is indeed the substance of all that has appeared upon the most careful examination, and upon a candid review of all the charges alledged against him. To me, till his affairs at *Hingham* made him known, he was an entire stranger. Perhaps had not the force of popular names been employed against him, and had not the venerable age of a good man been abused to sanctify by the authority of great past services, the indiscretion of friends, the objections might have perished at their birth, and the history of their existence have been lost forever. Mr. R. and his friends will continue to recollect that passion and prejudice are powerful enemies, with which they have to contend, especially when these enemies have the resources of wealth and the assistance of antient associations. They will also remember that their vigilance and their duty arise out of their perils, and that the glory of victory, is from the greatness of the courage and wisdom displayed in it. May christian motives strengthen you, and christian hopes encourage you. While you are firm to the truth, God will protect you.

Yours in all sincerity,

WILLIAM BENTLEY.

Agreeably to the order of notice upon the petition of JOSEPH THAXTER and others a committee from the first Parish met the agents of the petitioners before the Court's Committee.

The Court's Committee objected against going into the merits of the dispute and reported leave to the petitioners to bring in a bill.

The Committee from the first Parish and the agents of the petitioners agreed in making out a bill, which was enacted by the General Court.

As there have been numerous misrepresentations circulated abroad, prejudicial to the honour of the first Parish, we feel it our duty to lay before the public a comparative view of the number and property of the parties.

At the time of the ordination of Mr. RICHARDSON, the Parish Committee laid the following estimate before the Council.

Families, 241 in favour of the settlement of Mr. RICHARDSON and 70 opposed. The proportion of taxes for the support of the Minister was as 289 dollars paid by his opposers, to 803, paid by the whole Parish.*

The number of souls was as 1019, to 327 *against* him. The number of rateable polls was as 223† friends to 83 opposers. This statement was made as nearly correct as possible.

The number of petitioners incorporated into a new society was 98. Of this number 22 were single women. Of the 76 male petitioners 14 were single.

We have been more particular and minute in this last statement, that false reports might be completely detected.

The petitioners having built a Meeting-house and being incorporated, proceeded to make their arrangements for an Ordination. Now let the reader observe the proceedings of these gentlemen, who a little time since objected to the ordination of Mr. RICHARDSON, "because they considered the manner of *his* call and *his* acceptance irregular and unprecedented."‡

The Church of the First Parish had lent a number of

* This statement is not made for the sake of boasting, but that people may know, whether they have been deceived and how far they have been deceived in respect to numbers and property.

† At the present time, May 1807, the number of polls in the first Parish is 283.

‡ Observe the opposers' report.

silver cups to those who had separated themselves from the Church, and had suffered other property of the Church to remain in their hands, with the assurance they would give them up when called for. But it being insinuated that they intended to retain the property in their possession, a few days previous to the contemplated ordination, a committee of the Church called upon those who held the property to give it up, but they refused, intimating that they intended to be recognized as the First Church in *Hingham*, and to hold the property as their right.

Their Council being convened, the following remonstrance was sent them by the Church.

To the Reverend and respected Moderator of the Council, convened at the Derby Academy.

Whereas the first Church in *Hingham* hold by lawful right and title certain property, consisting of silver and other vessels, of furniture, land, a note of hand and other papers or records : And whereas a *part* of said vessels and furniture being in the hands of those who had separated from the Church, when called for by the Church committee, was delivered up ; And whereas by order of said Church their committee called on Monday last for the remainder of their property, which was refused, partly under this pretext, that those Church-members who have separated themselves from the said Church and Parish intend to be recognized as holding the right and title of the said first Church, and partly under this pretext, that a vote was passed in the Church to divide the property :

Therefore, we the undersigners, a committee in behalf of the said first Church, duly appointed, are compelled in vindication of the right and title of said Church, hereby to remonstrate against the members of the Church who belong to the third Congregational Society being recognized as the first Church in *Hingham*, or as holding, in their separate capacity, any right or title, as the said first Church.

We sincerely and deeply regret that we have any oc-

casion to interfere in the transactions of the said third Congregational society. But let it be remembered, that an attempt to withhold the property belonging to the said first Church, or to assume the right and title of the same, is the occasion which imperiously calls us to make this remonstrance.

Their first pretext for withholding the Church property, which is, that they have a claim to the right and title of the first Church, for the *following reasons*, cannot be maintained.

1. Those church-members who separated themselves from the first, or North Parish, never, at any regular meeting, constituted a majority in the church.

2. The first Church have uniformly adhered to the first Parish, and, on a thorough investigation, (both parties in the church being heard by a regular ordaining council) in July last, was recognized as in regular standing and in fellowship with the churches.

The other pretext for withholding the church property, is, That a vote was passed in the church to divide the property.

But we assert and pledge ourselves to prove to the satisfaction of any impartial tribunal, that no vote of separation or vote authorizing a division of the church property ever was passed at any regular meeting of the church.

The plain statement of facts is this. The first attempt of those who separated from the church to carry any point contrary to the church and Parish, was on the 9th day of January, 1806; when they 'voted to non-concur the doings of the Parish and to protest against the same.'

But the truth is, which we do support, that on the said 9th of January, 1806, *no regular Church meeting was holden.*† No object of a church-meeting was generally

† The following document proves there was no non-concurrence of the Church ever voted, as stated by the opposers. This document furnishes the proof referred to in the 33d page, 3d note from the bottom.

Hingham, December 23, 1806.

Whereas a certain communication has been made, purporting a statement of the proceedings of the first Church in *Hingham*, on the 9th day of January, 1806: Also purporting a non-concurrence of the Church with the Parish in calling Mr. JOSEPH RICHARDSON to settle as their minister, and a protest against the proceedings of the Parish:

known. No church meeting was warned, at the usual time* or in the usual manner. No church meeting was holden at the usual place.

While there is a pretence that a meeting of the church was holden on the said 9th of January 1806, in the Derby Academy, the statement of the proceedings of that meeting shews there were but twenty-one members present, whereas there were forty-six male members at that time resident in the Parish. Of that number (twenty-one) JOHN BEAL, a member of the church at *Cohasset* was one, whose relation never was removed to the first church in *Hingham.*

Another of that number was a negro-servant of Gen. LINCOLN, who never had a legal inhabitancy in the Town or paid any taxes.†

On the 22d of March, 1806, a regular meeting of the church was holden, when it was voted that the Sacrament should be administered as usual.

But the Deacons, although expressly requested, refused to make the usual preparations and with others withdrew, without the consent of the church, and held communion, immediately, in the Derby Academy.

When the church held a meeting on the 19th of June, 1806, for the purpose of making arrangements for an ordination, those who had separated themselves appeared and acted in opposition, but the votes were carried, 24 to 13.

We the subscribers, Committee of the said first Church in *Hingham,* hereby disclaim the whole pretence of that communication, as being by or under the authority of said Church; and we do hereby certify that *no meeting* of the first Church in *Hingham* was holden on the said 9th day of January, for the following reasons, viz.

1. That no Church meeting was warned in any usual manner.
2. That some had no notice of the pretended meeting.
3. That no purpose or occasion of a Church meeting was known to us. And
4. That no meeting of the Church was holden in the Meeting-house, according to our invariable custom.

THOMAS FEARING,
JACOB BEAL,
ISAAC CUSHING,
CALEB HOBART,
JOHN MARSH,
} *Committee of the said First Church.*

* It is the custom of the first Church in *Hingham* to notify their meetings on the sabbath.

† Granting the negro servant of Gen. LINCOLN had a right thus to give his vote in the Church, does it appear worthy of the character of a great and a good man in such a state of contention and division in the Church, to introduce such a character in order to carry a point?

Now if they constituted a majority in the church, wherein can it be made to appear, when, if any question, touching the division in the church, were agitated, they were always found in the minority ?

And if a vote of separation, or to divide the property of the church, had ever been passed, how came those who were separated from the church to be acting in the church on the said 19th of June ?

We forbear to enlarge, but pledge ourselves to substantiate what is herein asserted to be fact, and to make it appear to a mutual council or an ecclesiastical reference, before whom we ever have been, and now are, ready and willing to appear to settle any matters of dispute relating to the church.

We now assert our claim to the full right and title of the first church in *Hingham* and to all the property of the same; and remonstrate against the claim of any persons to said right and title.*

THOMAS FEARING,
JACOB BEAL,
ISAAC CUSHING,
CALEB HOBART,
JOHN MARSH,
SETH LINCOLN,
JOTHAM LINCOLN,

In behalf of the first Church in Hingham.

Hingham, June 16, 1807.

Now it appears those members, who separated from the Church without consent, have proceeded to establish themselves as a Church, and to procure the ordination of a minister. By what authority are the members of a Church separated without the consent or even a hearing of that body ? Is an ordaining Council vested with the power to separate and establish them ? Are not the members of a Church to be governed by that body as Church members, till their relation be removed by the consent of the Church or regularly dissolved ?

According to the platform of discipline of the *New-England* Churches, those who separated from the First Church, are guilty of conduct " unlawful and sinful."—

* The property has since been delivered up to the first Church.

We refer the reader to the 5th section of the 13th chapter of the platform, which is as follows: "To separate from a Church, either out of contempt of their holy fellowship, or out of covetousness, or for greater enlargements, with just grief to the Church; out of schism, or want of love, and out of a spirit of contention, in respect of some unkindness, or some evil only conceived, or indeed in the Church, which might and should be tolerated and held with a spirit of meekness, and of which evil the Church is not yet convinced, (though perhaps himself be) nor admonished for these or the like reasons to withdraw from public communion in word, or seals, or censures, is unlawful and sinful*."

Now, how members of a Church, separating themselves in the manner those did, who belong to the Third Congregational Society, could, without the voice or consent of the First Church, be formed into a separate Church in regular standing, is to us a mystery!

Perhaps the venerable Council who sanctioned this practice, can solve the difficulty.

If that Council had looked into the merits of the dispute by hearing both parties, and had found those who had separated themselves to be so far aggrieved, as to justify their conduct, then the council might have redressed their wrongs by establishing them as a separate Church. But this could not be done without giving the first church, from whom they separated, an opportunity to be heard. However, church or no church, it seems the opposers did not now trouble themselves concerning things "irregular and unprecedented."

It has been with a degree of reluctance that we have brought all these things to light, because it tends to keep contention alive.

But we have suffered wrong upon wrong, till a sense of duty has compelled us to correct the misrepresentations, which are gone abroad.

* The opposers may pretend, in justification of their conduct, that the vote of separation by the Parish set them at liberty from the Church. But the latter is an ecclesiastical, and the former a civil body or body politic. Will any one of common sense pretend that a body politic has power or a right to dissolve the relation of Church members? Even the General Court have nothing to do in forming or dissolving the relation of Church-membership.

We have endeavored to give a fair and correct statement of the principal transactions, which we have passed in review, and to detect the most material errors which have been propagated.

Many less important affairs have occurred, such as going to the neighboring towns to prevent or interrupt ministerial intercourse between their ministers and the minister of the First Parish in *Hingham*, and conveying defamatory papers to prejudice the minds of the public.

But, blushing for the depravity of human nature, we would suppress our emotions and forbear to enumerate the whole list of crimes !

Should any important point in this publication, be disputed, we pledge ourselves to prove it.

We ask only the lenity of candor for any inadvertency. As to documents that may be in the hands of the opposers, we should have been happy to publish them, had they been in our possession. The favor we could never obtain.

Should the occasion require we are ready, unpleasant as the business is, to enter into a more minute and thorough investigation of all the transactions and circumstances relating to the late controversy in *Hingham*.

Had we descended to a more minute detail of affairs, though we might have incurred a charge of censoriousness, it still would not, we believe, have appeared in the least to the disadvantage of our *cause*.

We have been compelled, as we believe in justice to ourselves, to expose a number of facts, by no means reflecting much honor upon certain characters, which might otherwise have forever rested in oblivion.

A narrative of all the circumstances and minutest transactions, relating to this controversy, would have swelled this statement into a large volume.

We appeal with respectful deference to the honest judgment of the candid, impartial reader to decide, whether the vindication we professed, be not ample and conclusive.

We have furnished the reader all the best authenticated documents favorable to the cause of our opponents, which we could obtain.

This truth must be admitted that "*belief*" is not always founded upon evidence. In order to ascertain what is truth, whatever is offered as evidence, should be critically examined and impartially weighed. The bare assertions of interested persons, even of the highest reputation, may not be substantially true.

But must not the fair testimony of disinterested characters of the highest reputation contained in this vindication impress strong conviction upon every unprejudiced mind ?

Can the bitter invectives and disguised insinuations of a few ill designing persons, whose characters are very little known, though known to be violent partizans in politics, none of whom pretend ever to have had but slight acquaintance with Mr. RICHARDSON, and that only during a few weeks or months, can such invectives and insinuations be entitled to much weight ?

Judge, candid reader, whether the surmises and insinuations of such characters are to be credited in opposition to the testimony of the venerable Dr. CUMINGS of *Billerica*, whosehigh reputation is acknowledged by all parties ?

Are they to be credited in opposition to the testimony of Rev. Dr. SMITH, Pastor of the Church of which he was a member, and to the testimony of the Trustees of the schools and the selectmen of *Charlestown*, who were witnesses of the conversation and deportment of Mr. RICHARDSON from the time he left *Billerica* till he was called to settle in *Hingham ?*

But if the contrary testimonials in the hands of the opposers be substantially true, why have they been so long kept under a cloak ? Why were not the letters themselves circulated and not the charges which were formed out of them ? Truth undisguised is the only honorable vindication of a good and just cause.

We have shewn that our opposers were favored with an opportunity to lay all their evidence before an ordaining Council, and that they occupied a great part of two days in adducing what they called their evidence, and in commenting upon it, and that the Council were, after hearing the whole, unanimous in their result and proceeded to the ordination.

Will any candid, ingenuous reader place more confidence in the statement of a party in the dispute in *Hingham*, than in the result of a regular ordaining Council, all of whom, (eight in number) to say the least, are men of honest report, and several of whom stand high in public esteem ? We ask no one implicitly to confide in our word or bare assertion; we only ask a mature consideration of the testimony of others, and such assertions as may be found well supported.

The preceding vindication is respectfully submitted to the candid judgment of the public, by the subscribers.

JACOB BEAL,	JACOB LEAVITT,	*Committees of the first Church and Parish in Hingham, chosen to receive and attend the Ordaining Council and to act in behalf of the said first Church and Parish.*
ISAAC CUSHING,	HAWKES FEARING,	
TH. FEARING,	LABAN HERSEY,	
JOSEPH BASSET,	SOLOMON JONES,	
SETH LINCOLN,	CHARLES LINCOLN,	
CALEB HOBART,	JEDEDIAH LINCOLN,	
JOTHAM LINCOLN,	SOLOMON LINCOLN,	
	DUNCAN M'B. THAXTER	
	JAMES STEPHENSON,	

OMISSIONS.

Page 17, *line* 1*st. after* "*his ordination*" *read the following note:*

It may be said by the opposers that it was proposed on their part not to oppose Mr. R's ordination, on condition that his friends would sign an obligation not to use any influence to prevent their being set off as a separate Parish or Society. The reasons of Mr. R's friends for not complying with that condition, were,

1. Because such an obligation might have been construed into an excuse for the opposers not appearing to support their charges.

2. Because Mr. R's friends might by such a measure have incurred this reflection, that they did it to screen Mr. R's character from a thorough investigation. And

3. Because such a measure would have been a relinquishment of the right of the First Parish to oppose the incorporation of the opposers as a poll Parish, but the First Parish had not, by their vote, deprived themselves of the privilege of using their influence to obtain an incorporation upon terms the most favorable to the First Parish.

Page 44, *line* 18*th, where it says,* "*without a parallel,*" *the following note should have been introduced.* The opposers' Committee undoubtedly state the truth, if the conduct of their own party be taken into an account of the transaction. The reader must discover what regard they pay to truth and decency, and by what sort of religion they were influenced in their conduct, by their closing remarks. We would forbear thus to express our indignation, but the attack upon the Council and Parish in those concluding remarks demands that *the injured* should no longer suffer.

FINIS.

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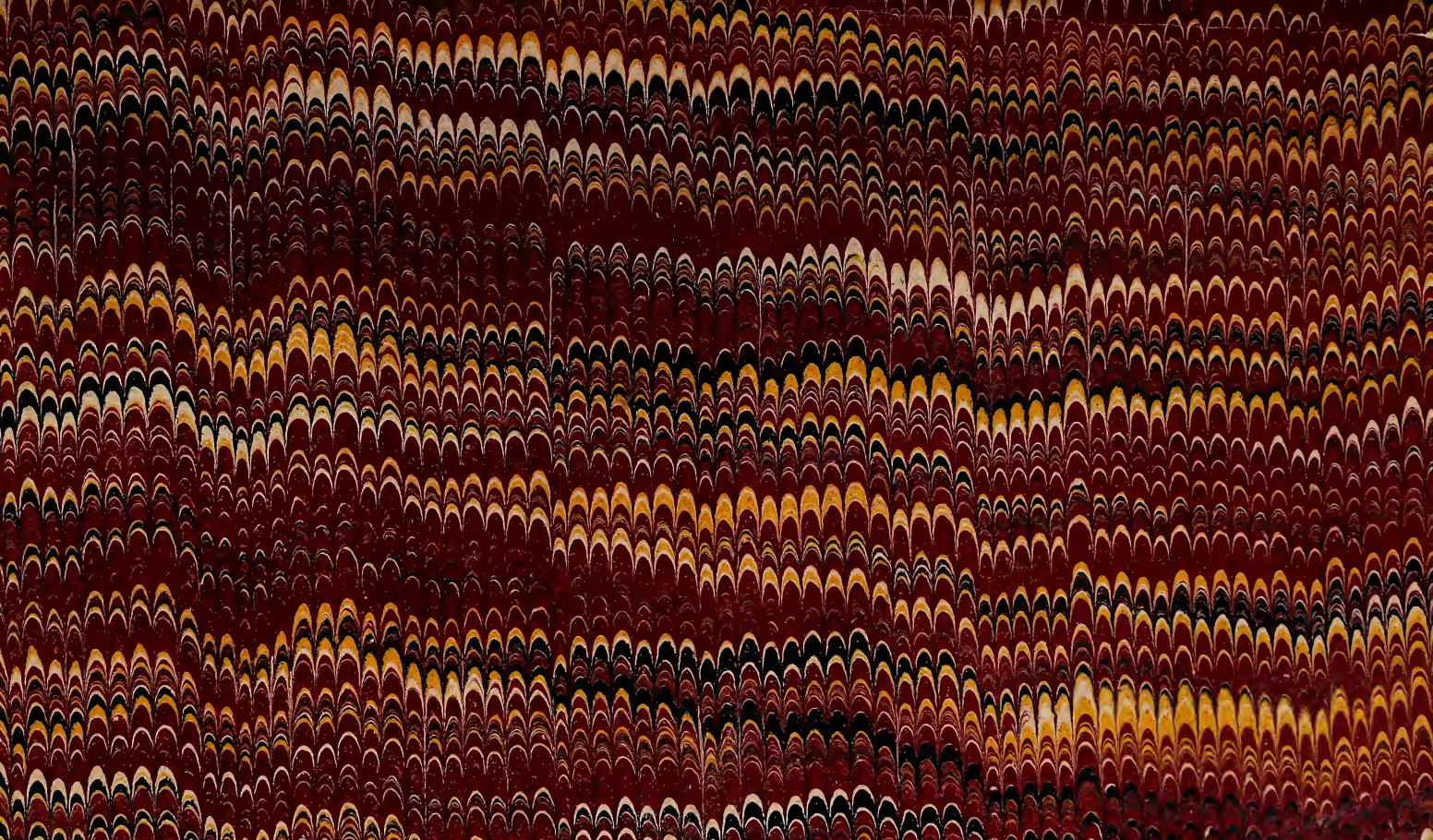

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